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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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AI SHUTTLE BUS ON FIRE

A shuttle bus belonging to Air India's ground handling unit caught fire at Terminal 3 of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on Tuesday afternoon. The blaze, which engulfed the rear of the vacant bus parked near an Air India aircraft, was quickly extinguished, officials said. No passengers were on board at the time ***PHOTO: PTI***
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K'taka HC stays govt order restricting RSS events

HC says govt cannot curtail rights given by the Constitution

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

In a setback to the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government, Karnataka High Court on Tuesday stayed the State's order mandating that private organisations seek prior permission before holding any activities in government-owned spaces.

Although the government circular, issued earlier this month, did not name the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), it was widely seen as targeting the Hindu Right-wing organisation's route marches and public events.

Justice M Nagaprasanna granted an interim stay on the order and posted the matter for hearing on 17 November.

The High Court observed that the government cannot curtail rights guaranteed under Articles 19(1)(A) and 19(1)(B) of the Constitution, which protect freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, and held that a government order cannot override constitutional rights.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said he had directed officials to appeal the single-judge bench's stay.

The petition was filed by Punashchetana Seva Samsthe, which argued that the order curtailed citizens' constitutional rights to peaceful assembly. Senior advocate Ashok Haranahalli, appearing for the petitioner, said the directive "mandates permission even for gatherings of more than ten people," effectively criminalising lawful assemblies such as small events in public parks.

The government's 18 October order requires permission to be sought at least three days in advance for any private organisation, association, society, trust, or club — whether registered or not — wishing to hold events on government premises. These include land, buildings, roads, parks, playgrounds, water bodies, and any immovable property owned or managed by government departments, boards, or corporations.

The order also extends to rallies and processions involving over ten people, accompanied by music or moving along a common route. Marriage and funeral gatherings are exempt. The jurisdictional police commissioner or deputy commissioner has been designated as the competent authority to issue permits.

The move followed a recent Cabinet decision prompted by IT/BT and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge's letter to the Chief Minister, urging a ban on RSS activities in public spaces. *—PTI*

Although the government circular, issued earlier this month, did not name RSS, it was widely seen as targeting the Hindu Right-wing organisation's route marches and public events ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

INDIA releases Bihar manifesto

PATNA, 28 OCT

RJD leader and INDIA bloc chief ministerial candidate Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday pledged to legalise toddy if the alliance comes to power, as the Opposition bloc released its manifesto titled 'Bihar ka Tejashwi Pran'. The document promises sweeping welfare measures, job guarantees, and economic reforms.

Bihar has remained a dry state since 2016, when Chief Minister Nitish Kumar enforced total prohibition.

A key highlight of the manifesto is a proposed employment guarantee law to be introduced within 20 days of forming government and implemented statewide within 20 months. The bloc also pledged to regularise all Jeevika Community Mobilisers, granting them permanent status with a monthly salary of Rs 30,000. Their existing loans will be waived, and they will receive interest-free loans for two years.

Contractual and outsourced employees will also be made permanent. The Old Pension Scheme will be reinstated and under 'Mai Bahin Maan Yojana', the bloc promises Rs 2,500 monthly aid to women, amounting to Rs 30,000 annually for five years. Two additional schemes, BETI (Benefits, Education, Training and Income) and MAI (Mothers' Assistance for Housing, Food and Income), will aim to strengthen women's economic security. The manifesto also outlines plans for IT parks, SEZs, dairy and agro-industries, an Education City, five expressways, and reforms in recruitment — including abolishing application and exam fees, providing free travel to test centres, and cracking down on paper leaks. *—PTI*

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Amazon to cut 30,000 jobs amid AI boom

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

E-commerce giant Amazon is poised to cut approximately 30,000 corporate jobs starting Tuesday, as part of a significant cost-cutting initiative in response to overhiring during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Reuters. This reduction accounts for 10 per cent of Amazon's 350,000 corporate staff, although it represents a small fraction of the company's overall workforce of 1.55 million. This latest layoff marks the largest job cuts since the 27,000 layoffs conducted between late 2022 and early 2023, following a report that the company plans to cut up to 15 per cent of its human resources staff. ***—Agencies***
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Rajinikanth, Dhanush receive bomb threats

CHENNAI, 8 OCT

The Tamil Nadu police on Tuesday said emails claiming bomb planting at the residences of actors Rajinikanth and Dhanush were received by the state Director General of Police. According to Teynampet police, the first mail targeting Rajinikanth's house arrived around 8.30am on 27 October. "When we contacted them, they declined bomb squad assistance," an officer said. A second threat mail was received at 6.30pm the same day, and Rajinikanth's team again refused inspection. Actor Dhanush also received a similar email later that day and declined police assistance. Officials said several celebrities have received such threats recently, and Cyber Crime police are tracing the email source. ***— PTI***

High waves crash against the rocky shoreline amid rough sea conditions brought on by Cyclone Montha in Chennai on Tuesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Cyclone Montha makes landfall in Andhra

AMARAVATI, 28 OCT

The landfall process of severe cyclonic storm Montha began off the Andhra Pradesh coast on Tuesday evening, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) confirming that it would continue for three to four hours near Kakinada. The storm, packing winds of 90–100 kmph gusting up to 110 kmph, is crossing the coast between Machilipatnam and Kalingapatnam.

The cyclone was named Montha by Thailand. In the Thai language, "Montha" means "beautiful" or "fragrant flower"

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the cyclone's impact would be intense, with heavy rains expected across 3,778 villages in 338 mandals. Preliminary estimates show damage to standing crops over 38,000 hectares and horticultural crops across 1.38 lakh hectares. About 76,000 people have been shifted to relief camps, and 488 control rooms and 219 medical camps have been set up across 22 districts.

Authorities suspended vehicular movement from 8.30pm to 6am in seven coastal districts, including Krishna, Kakinada, and Konaseema. More than 3.6 crore alert messages have been sent to residents, while 1,447 earthmovers, 321 drones and 1,040 chainsaws are on standby for restoration work.

High sea waves up to 4.7 metres were reportedDanger signals were hoisted at several ports including Kakinada and Visakhapatnam. Air travel was severely disrupted, with all 32 flights from Visakhapatnam Airport and 16 from Vijayawada cancelled. South Central Railway cancelled 120 trains across its zone. *—PTI*
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HAL ties up with Russia to make civil jets

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

In a first for India, the country will begin manufacturing Russian twin-engine passenger jets under a new strategic collaboration between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Russia's Public Joint Stock Company–United Aircraft Corporation (PJSC-UAC).

The agreement, signed in Moscow on Monday, allows HAL to produce the Sukhoi SJ-100 narrow-body aircraft in India for short-haul commercial flights. Over 200 SJ-100s are already in operation globally across 16 airlines.

HAL described the project as a game changer for India's regional air connectivity under the government's UDAN scheme. "This partnership will enable HAL to manufacture SJ-100 aircraft for domestic customers and strengthen India's aviation ecosystem," the company said.

The signing took place in the presence of HAL Chairman and Managing Director DK Sunil and UAC Director General Vadim Badekha.

HAL said the venture marks a new chapter in the history of the Indian aviation industry and aligns with the government's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) vision.

The project is expected to boost the private sector and create both direct and indirect employment opportunities. According to HAL estimates, India will need over 200 aircraft in this category within a decade for regional connectivity, besides 350 additional jets for the Indian Ocean region to cater to nearby international tourist destinations.

"This collaboration reflects the deep mutual trust between HAL and UAC. It will be the first time a complete passenger aircraft is produced in India since the AVRO HS-748 project, which ran from 1961 to 1988," HAL said. *—PTI*

RISKY ROADS

Good infra is a basic right, yet it continues to be denied as City's roads fall to new lows each day. One such instance is on Millers Road, where branches have been placed to cover an open manhole, posing a grave risk to motorists. This is as CM Siddaramaiah's 7-day deadline to fix potholes issued on 21 October comes to an ends ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Punjab bizman shot dead in Canada

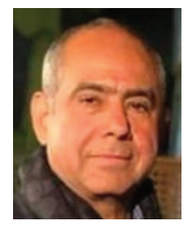
TORONTO, 28 OCT

A 68-year-old Punjabi businessman, **Darshan Singh Sahsi**, was shot dead outside his home in Abbotsford, British Columbia, on Monday morning, sending shockwaves through the local South Asian community.

Sahsi, originally from Rajgarh village near Doraha in Ludhiana, Punjab, was a prominent entrepreneur in the cloth recycling industry and served as president of Canam International, one of the world's leading clothing recyclers.

According to police, the attack occurred as Sahsi was leaving for work. The assailant, waiting in a car near his residence, reportedly opened fire as Sahsi entered his vehicle. Despite immediate medical attention, he succumbed to multiple gunshot wounds on the spot. The Abbotsford Police Department has launched an investigation and is examining whether the killing is linked to an alleged ransom case. Reports suggest Sahsi had received ransom calls in the past, which he had ignored.

The investigation is ongoing, and no arrests have been made so far. *—Agencies*



'Indian soils low in nitrogen, organic carbon'

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

India's soils are critically deficient in key nutrients such as nitrogen and organic carbon, posing a major threat to sustainable agriculture, according to a new study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

The analysis, based on data from the government's Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme, found that 64 per cent of soil samples were low in nitrogen and 48.5 per cent were deficient in organic carbon, both vital for soil fertility and climate resilience.

The study said India's heavy fertiliser use has failed to improve soil health. "Applying nitrogen-based fertilisers has not led to any improvement in soil nitrogen levels or organic carbon content," it noted. The report warned that this could undermine long-term productivity and the soil's capacity to store carbon, a key factor in mitigating climate change. *—PTI*

BYE BYE SLOUCH HATS

Karnataka police to now don navy blue peak caps

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

Karnataka police constables will now wear navy blue peak caps instead of the traditional slouch hats that have been part of their uniform for nearly five decades. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched and distributed the new caps at a ceremony in Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday.

Officials described the switch as "a significant and timely change" for the force. Unlike the slouch hats, the new peak caps will not carry the constable's service number, which will be displayed only on the shoulder badge.

"I chose the design of the new caps released today. Since 1956, the same design has been used. Now, all officers and personnel will wear a uniform cap. I hope this will boost your self-confidence," said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, adding "Not just your cap, but your efficiency should change too."

Home Minister Parameshwara said that slouch hats were first introduced for the State's police force in In 1973 under the then chief minister Devaraj Urs. Before that, police personnel wore turbans, while the armed forces adopted slouch hats in 1953.

Parameshwara noted that there had been several demands over the years to change the cap design, but the proposal did not materialise for various reasons.

He said there had been several demands over the years to change the design, as the hats were cumbersome during rains and not aesthetically appealing.

"Even in 2015, when I was home minister, there was a proposal for change, but it didn't materialise," he noted.

After reviewing designs used in other states, the blue cap was selected by Siddaramaiah himself. *—PTI*

Cops take a selfie after receiving their new navy-blue peak caps at a function at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Tuesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Kolar bar cashier murdered over ₹10 drink

KOLAR, 28 OCT

A habitual drunkard allegedly murdered a bar cashier over a Rs 10 drink dispute. The incident occurred on Sunday night at Ashok Wine Shop in Lakkur village, Malur taluk. The deceased, Kumaraswamy, 45, originally from Kaduru in Chikkamagalur, was assaulted by the accused, Subash, a JCB driver. B Nikhil, Superintendent of Police Kolar, stated that Subash ordered drinks but was refused a mixer due to unpaid bills, leading to a quarrel where both men sustained injuries. They agreed to resolve their issues the following morning. However, as Kumaraswamy arrived home, Subash attacked him with a knife in front of his wife and fled. The police arrested Subash within hours, and he has been remanded in custody *—Salar News*

₹1 cr seized from bus in Uttara Kannada district

KARWAR, 28 OCT

Police confiscated Rs 1 crore in unaccounted cash from two passengers on a bus at the Majali check-post in Karwar taluk of the State on Monday. The bus was travelling from Goa to Bengaluru when it was stopped for inspection. Officers discovered the cash hidden in bags belonging to passengers Kalpesh Kumar and Bombra Ram. Preliminary investigations indicate the money belonged to a private software company in Goa, destined for a Bengaluru firm, but no valid documentation was provided. The cash has been deposited in the government treasury, with both men handed over to the Income Tax Department for further questioning. Police Chief Deepan MN stated, "Strict action will be taken against those transporting cash without proper documentation." *—Salar News*

FIR filed over Bishnoi graffiti at Tipu Palace

C'PURA, 28 OCT

An FIR has been lodged against unidentified individuals following an incident of graffiti on the wall of Tipu Sultan's Palace atop Nandi Hills, referencing gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) oversees the monument, which served as Tipu Sultan's summer residence. The defacement was discovered on Monday morning by visitors to the site, prompting immediate action from ASI officials who erased the graffiti. "We have registered a case against unknown persons under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for trespassing, public mischief, and damage to public property," a senior police officer stated. Authorities are currently reviewing CCTV footage to identify the culprits. *—PTI*

Kerala CPI(M), Cong flay BJP's K'taka 'land scam'

PALAKKAD/KANNUR, 28 OCT

The ruling CPI(M) in Kerala and the Opposition Congress on Tuesday accused the state BJP President Rajeev Chandrasekhar of being involved in a "land scam" in Karnataka. The state BJP chief has dismissed the allegations as "baseless" and "lies." While CPI(M) state secretary MV Govindan sought an SIT probe against Chandrasekhar, the Congress demanded that the BJP chief be arrested. Govindan alleged that the BJP leader sold for a huge profit, the land given to his father-in-law's company for industrial development in Karnataka. *—PTI*

Tejasvi meets DKS to scrap tunnel road

Pitches for expanding Metro and bus routes; DKS says okay, let's go ask Modi for funds

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

Bengaluru South BJP MP Tejasvi Surya on Tuesday met Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and suggested scrapping the proposed Tunnel Road project in the City.He advocated for the expansion of Metro and suburban rail networks to ease congestion.

Describing the hour-long meeting with Shivakumar, who also holds the Bengaluru portfolio, as "very productive".He presented the KPCC President with an Alternative Sustainable Mobility Action Plan.

"We discussed how expanding public transport is the only sustainable way to ensure effective commute and mobility in the City. I have requested that the amount of money proposed to be spent on the car-only tunnel project be diverted towards Metro. The goal of our policy should be to move more people rather than more cars," Surya said.

Shivakumar, however, has maintained that the proposed tunnel road — from Silk Board to Hebbal —would "transform mobility"16.75km signal-free tunnel will allow commuters to bypass 25 traffic bottlenecks, saving 45 minutes daily, he said. The route would also provide direct access to the City's IT corridor. He had earlier said "only God can stop me" from building the tunnel road.

Citing the government's own Detailed Project Report (DPR), Surya claimed that 1,800 vehicles could travel per hour in each direction through the tunnel.

"But if the same effort is made to build a metro or MRTS line, close to 69,000 people can be transported per hour in the same direction," the MP said.

"I have proposed that on Outer Ring Road, which is the most congested stretch, we have two metro stations at either end, KR Puram and Silk Board. Between these, if dedicated loop buses run every five or 10 minutes on exclusive lanes, it will ease the traffic," he said.

Later, Shivakumar said, "We have no objection to expanding the metro. I will discuss his suggestions with officials."

"He (Surya) also proposed allowing private buses and mini-buses in Bengaluru. But the number of vehicles on City roads is already high. If we permit more private buses, what benefit will that bring?" he remarked.

Shivakumar also said MPs should join him in meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek central funds for the State. "He suggested 70 per cent public transport on the ORR, implementation of BRTS (Bus Rapid Transit System), and an increase in suburban trains. I agreed and said, 'Fine, let's go to the Centre and ask for funds".

TEJASVI SAYS MOVE PEOPLE NOT CARS

- Focus on mass rapid transport (eg; Metro)
- Build 300 km of metro lines with a 3-minute frequency and 300 km of suburban rail
- Create a bus loop between Metro stations on ORR
- Appoint a chairperson for the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA)
- DKS promised that Lalbagh would not be damaged

> **Our opposition to the tunnel road will continue because if you are investing Rs 47,000 crore for 35km of road, how will another 35km solve Bengaluru's traffic problem?**
>
> —Tejasvi Surya, Bengaluru South MP

NO TREES WILL BE CUT IN LALBAGH: GOVT TO HC

The State government told the Karnataka High Court that no trees will be cut for the tunnel road, Surya said.

Surya, who is representing actor and activist Prakash Belawadi in the case, said that the matter has been posted for 9 Dec. *—Agencies*

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday **PHOTO: X @TEJASVI_SURYA**

FUN AND GAMES

A seer, Sri Satyatmatheertha Swamiji of the Uttaradi Matt went for a joy ride in a driverless car at RV College in City on Tuesday **PHOTO: X**

Probe graft charges against Speaker: BJP MP

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

BJP MP Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri on Tuesday demanded a judicial probe by a sitting judge into allegations of corruption against State Assembly Speaker UT Khader, during his 2.5 year tenure.

Kageri also called for bringing the office of the Speaker under the ambit of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, to ensure transparency.

"There are allegations that Khader in his 2.5 years tenure as the Speaker of the Assembly, has indulged in corruption, in the name of administrative reforms. Such allegations are there in the media, social media, YouTube and others," he said.

The former State Assembly speaker said, "The projects undertaken by him were not urgent, several of them were rejected by the Finance Department, but still using the Chief Minister's influence they were getting sanctioned. There are allegations that the works were taken up by obtaining 4 (g) exemptions."

"The works include installation of smart lockers to rooms at legislators' home and other equipment, book fair, lighting (to Vidhana Soudha), massage chairs for legislators, food arrangements, AI monitored TV , carpets -- in everything, it appears that there is corruption. There are allegations that (contracts) are being given to some people who are from Mangaluru (from where Khader hails)."

Noting that the Speaker's position carries great dignity in democracy, the BJP MP said it should remain above suspicion.

"Let there be a judicial probe by a sitting judge, and let him come out clean. There will be none who will be happier than me," the BJP leader said.

Asked whether he had any supporting documents, Kageri said, "I will definitely provide the information I have. *—PTI*

After protest, govt clarifies on B'luru Business Corridor

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

The State government issued a clarification after a farmers body wrote to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, urging the ruling Congress to scrap the Peripheral Ring Road (PRR) Phase I, now renamed the Bengaluru Business Corridor (BBC).

The PRR Farmers' and Landlords' Association had opposed the Bengaluru Development Authority's (BDA) proposed five-point compensation formula and termed the project as anti-farmer.

The official X handle of the Bengaluru Business Corridor responded to a post by activist Prasanna Viswanathan linking articles about the same.

"The total land being acquired is 2,418 acres in 2,584 survey numbers," the statement claimed. "Around 5,000 families are losing whole or part of their lands and not 20,000 families."

However, the farmer's body and Viswanathan said that 20,000 families would be affected.

The BBC claimed that the farmers hadn't rejected the five-point proposal, as the government would present the options to them only in November.

The farmers body on Monday had also argued that the cash compensation under the proposal is undervalued because the guideline values were not revised since 2016.

However, the BBC said that "the cash compensation will be paid on par with the 2013: 2 times the current guidance value (GV) in urban areas and 3 times the current GV in rural areas."

It said it cannot use the market value as metric, because "there is no clear measure of what open market value is".

Including cash compensation, the five-point plan also provided the farmers of availing Transferable Development Rights (TDR), additional Floor Area Ratio (FAR), developed residential land, and developed commercial land. However, the Association termed the plan as an "eyewash".

The crucial point is allowing the project to happen is a win-win for all," the government retorted. "It will decongest North Bengaluru. Farmers whose lands are locked in for the past 20 years will get a closure and, if they choose land, TDRs or FAR as compensation, then they will benefit with the project's success." *—Salar News*

- On Monday, a farmers body opposed the five-point compensation plan which includes cash compensation, Transferable Development Rights (TDR), additional Floor Area Ratio (FAR), developed residential land, and developed commercial land

Chittapur peace meet crumbles as groups stand firm

KALABURAGI, 28 OCT

A peace meeting organised by the Kalaburagi district administration concerning a planned RSS procession in Chittapur on 2 November descended into chaos, as Dalit organisations insisted that the RSS conduct the event without lathis. RSS representatives firmly opposed this demand, resulting in a heated exchange that led to the abrupt adjournment of the meeting.

The district administration convened the meeting on Tuesday to discuss the contentious issue, but both sides remained unwavering in their positions. Dalit organisations warned of a protest if their demands are unmet.

The meeting was attended by representatives of 10 organisations, including the RSS, Bhim Army, Bharatiya Dalit Panthers, Hasiru Sene, Karnataka Rajya Chalavadi Kshemabhivruddi Sangha, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, and Gonda Kuruba ST Horata Samithi, among others, officials said.

The High Court had asked the government to submit a report on 30 Oct. *—Agencies*

HIGH COMMAND'S DECISION

We voted Siddaramaiah as CM for 5 years: Parameshwara

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said when Siddaramaiah was elected leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) after the 2023 Assembly polls to become the Chief Minister, no timeframe was specified for his tenure.

"We were not told then that Siddaramaiah would be Chief Minister for only 2.5 years," Parameshwara told reporters after meeting State Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa at his residence.

He urged the Congress High Command to put an end to the rumours of a rotational Chief Minister.

Amid speculation about the nature of their meeting, Parameshwara and Mahadevappa clarified that it had "nothing to do with politics" but was to discuss funds for a cooperative in Tumakuru led by the Home Minister.

"In our view, we chose Siddaramaiah to be the CM for five years. If the High Command decides otherwise, we will accept it—that is all we can do. We had not fixed any time frame while choosing the CLP leader; if the High Command decides anything else, it is up to them," Parameshwara said.

Asked about Siddaramaiah's recent comment indicating he may contest the 2028 Assembly polls, Parameshwara said, "He said that some leaders are pressuring him to contest, and he will decide later." *—PTI*

No chance for Dalit CM now, says Mahadevappa

State Social Welfare Minister and senior Dalit leader HC Mahadevappa said that there was no situation for a Dalit CM at the time being. "Such a situation doesn't exist now," he said. "If it arises, the High Command will consult everyone, and we will share our views then."

Govt can win Guinness Record for potholes: Ashoka

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

R Ashoka, the Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly, slammed the Congress government claiming that it had forgotten about road development. He quipped that the State government could get a Guinness Record for the most number of potholes. Speaking at a press conference, he said that around twelve people have died due to potholes.

"People are saying they won't pay taxes and will fill the potholes themselves. If the government tells us how many potholes there are in the roads across the entire State we can send it for a Guinness record," he said.

He noted that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah held a meeting and instructed to do one layer of asphalting.

"This requires 4-5000 crore rupees. Librarians and anganwadi workers haven't even received their salaries. So where is the money? BBMP doesn't exist, so tenders for road asphalting aren't happening. We will cancel the GBA," he said. *—ANI*

> **Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar goes around the City wearing cooling glasses, so he doesn't see the potholes** -R Ashoka, Opposition Leader

₹15,000 AI DATA CENTRE ROW

Andhra lured Google with bribes: Congress

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

The Karnataka Congress accused Andhra Pradesh of "luring" Google away from the State. This comes after the tech giant announced plans to set up Rs 15,000 cr AI data centre hub in in Visakhapatnam. The move had triggered a war of words between IT Minister Priyank Kharge and his Andhra counterpart Nara Lokesh over which state deserves the title of India's true Silicon Valley.

"Karnataka didn't lose Google, it was lured away," the Congress said in a statement on X. It said Google went to Andhra Pradesh because it offered "bribes".

"Here's what was offered: 15 years of free power; 10 years of water at 25 per cent cost; 480 acres of land at throwaway rates; 100 per cent SGST reimbursement worth Rs 2,245 crore," it claimed.

"We don't beg, plead or even coerce investment, we attract it because we are India's No.1 state in FDI. We are the Tech Capital of India," it added. "We attract investors not through infeasible incentives, but through talent, innovation, and integrity."

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and KPCC President vowed to keep fighting for the City's IT development. He also highlighted Mercedes-Benz CEO Ola Källenius' praise for the City's talent to underscore Bengaluru's growing stature as a global innovation hub.

"His appreciation that every visit here 'doubles his energy' is a proud recognition of our people's brilliance. Bengaluru's creativity, talent and spirit of innovation continue to inspire the world's best," he said. *—Salar News*

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan at the Bharat Jodo Hall, KPCC Office, on Tuesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Cong to finalise Legislative Council candidates in 8 days

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar asked party workers to "start working right away" for the Legislative Council elections to be held in 2026.

Speaking at a KPCC event, he said that the party will finalise candidates within eight days for the Legislative Council's Western and Southeastern Graduates' and Northeastern and Bengaluru Teachers' constituencies.

The meeting was attended by AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, among others. *—Salar News*

INDIA woos Bihar youth with job push

The bloc also vows 200 units of free electricity and the abolishing of Waqf Act

PATNA, 28 OCT

The INDIA bloc's manifesto for Bihar has laid out a wide-ranging welfare and development agenda, promising sweeping reforms in education, employment, agriculture, and social justice if voted to power.

In the education sector, the bloc pledged to establish a women's college in every sub-division and degree college in all 136 blocks.

All unaided affiliated colleges will be converted into aided institutions, ensuring parity in pay and benefits for teachers and staff. An "Education City" will be developed across 2,000 acres, along with industry clusters and five new expressways to spur regional growth.

The manifesto guarantees procurement of all crops at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and a revival of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act.

Mandis and market committees will be re-established at division, sub-division, and block levels to ensure farmers receive fair prices.

Every household will receive 200 units of free electricity, while the Jan Swasthya Suraksha Yojana will offer free health insurance cover of up to Rs 25 lakh. District hospitals and medical colleges will be upgraded with super-speciality facilities, and state employees will get health benefits on a par with the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS).

Under MGNREGA, the daily wage will rise from Rs 255 to Rs 300, and the work limit will be doubled from 100 to 200 days. The bloc also promised to press the Centre to fix a Rs 400 daily wage across Bihar.

A new law modelled on the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act will protect Extremely Backward Classes, while reservations for EBCs and SCs in local bodies will rise to 30 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. The bloc also vowed to scrap the 50 per cent reservation cap by seeking its inclusion in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

Three hundred SC and ST students will be sent abroad annually on scholarships.

The INDIA bloc further pledged to halt the implementation of the Centre's Waqf (Amendment) Act and transfer management of Bodh Gaya's Buddhist temples to the Buddhist community.

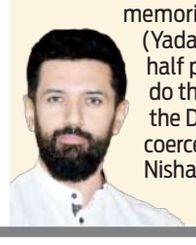
A new welfare department for migrant workers, a Labour Census, and Bihar Mitra Centres in major cities will provide legal aid, training, and job support. —*PTI*

Congress leaders Pawan Khera, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and CPI (ML) Liberation General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya releases INDIA bloc's manifesto for Bihar Assembly elections, in Patna, on Tuesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

> **Saran is witnessing murder, dacoity, abduction and loot every day. But, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is least bothered about it ... This is sheer insensitivity on the part of the government ... Vote for the INDIA bloc to ensure improved law and order, jobs and redressal of grievances**
>
> -Tejashwi Yadav, RJD leader

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will be in Bihar from Wednesday to campaign for five Assembly constituencies -- Bochahan (Muzaffarpur), Danapur (Patna Rural), Patna Sahib (Patna), Madhuban, and Dinara (Rohtas).

WITH TEJASHWI AS CANDIDATE, INDIA HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING: PASWAN



PATNA, 28 OCT : Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) Chief **Chirag Paswan** said naming of RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav as the chief ministerial candidate of INDIA bloc has revived memories of Bihar's "jungle raj". "So, by naming him (Yadav) the CM, the INDIA bloc has given up the half per cent chance it might have had. And what do they hope to gain by promising Mukesh Sahni the Deputy CM's post? The way he has been coerced into submission by RJD is not lost on his Nishad community", he said.

2 RJD MLAS AMONG 27 EXPELLED FOR ANTI-PARTY ACTIVITIES IN BIHAR

PATNA, 28 OCT: The RJD has expelled 27 leaders — including two MLAs, four former legislators and an MLC — for anti-party activities and "defying the organisation's ideology" in the run-up to the Bihar assembly elections. According to a statement issued by RJD state Chief **Mangani Lal Mandal**, the expelled leaders have also been suspended from the party's primary membership. The expelled MLAs are Chote Lal Rai (Parasa) and Mohammad Kamran (Govindpur).

Kishor's name in Bihar, Bengal voter lists; notice issued

PATNA/KOLKATA, 28 OCT

Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor was on Tuesday served a notice over his name being reportedly registered as a voter in his home state of Bihar as well as adjoining West Bengal.

The notice has been issued by the district election office in Bihar's Rohtas, where Kishor has been registered as a voter in Kargahar assembly segment, directing him to respond within three days.

According to official records, Kishor is enrolled as a voter in West Bengal at 121, Kalighat Road, the address of the Trinamool Congress headquarters in Kolkata's Bhabanipur assembly constituency, which is Chief Minister and TMC Chief Mamata Banerjee's seat, an election official in West Bengal said.

During the 2021 assembly elections in West Bengal, Kishor had worked as a political consultant for TMC. —*PTI*

BRS donations drop from ₹580 cr to ₹15 cr in 2025

HYDERABAD, 28 OCT

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), which suffered a heavy defeat in the 2023 Telangana Assembly elections, saw its donations fall drastically to just over Rs 15 crore in the last financial year. According to filings with the Election Commission, the K Chandrasekhar Rao-led party had received more than Rs 580 crore the previous year. Of the Rs 15.09 crore reported for 2024–25, Rs 15 crore came from electoral trust funds and the rest from individual contributors. In 2023–24, BRS had received over Rs 495 crore through electoral bonds and Rs 85 crore via electoral trusts. The previous year, 2022–23, the party's total donations stood at Rs 683 crore, marking a sharp decline in post-poll funding. —*PTI*

Bypolls for 12 wards of Delhi MCD to be held on Nov

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

The bypolls for 12 wards of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will be held on 30 November, the Delhi State Election Commission announced on Tuesday. Nominations open on 3 November and close on 10 November, followed by scrutiny on 12 November and withdrawal by 15 November. Voting will be conducted from 7.30am to 5.30pm, and counting will take place on 3 December. The wards going to bypolls include Mundka, Shalimar Bagh-B, Ashok Vihar, Chandni Chowk, Chandni Mahal, Dwarka-B, Dichaon Kalan, Naraina, Sangam Vihar-A, Dakshin Puri, Greater Kailash and Vinod Nagar. Several seats fell vacant after councillors from BJP and AAP contested and won the Delhi Assembly elections. —*PTI*

J'khand BJP calls 12-hr bandh over assault on tribals

JAMSHEDPUR/RANCHI, 28 OCT

BJP's Jharkhand unit has called for a 12-hour bandh in two Kolhan districts — West Singhbhum and Seraikela-Kharsawan — on Wednesday in protest against alleged police lathicharge on tribal demonstrators in Chaibasa town, a party leader said on Tuesday. State BJP working President Aditya Sahu said the party would also take out torchlight processions across all district headquarters to protest against the alleged incident. Sahu claimed hundreds of tribal people were on way to the residence of transport minister Deepak Birua on Monday to demand imposition of "no entry" of heavy vehicles on NH 220 and NH 75E. The party is to observe a bandh, from 6am to 6pm, in West Singhbhum and Seraikela-Kharsawan on Wednesday, he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Didi says WB man killed self over fear of NRC

KOLKATA, 28 OCT

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday accused the BJP of spreading fear over the National Register of Citizens (NRC) after a 57-year-old man allegedly died by suicide near Kolkata, leaving behind a note blaming the NRC. Barrackpore Commissioner of Police Muralidhar Sharma said Pradeep Kar of Panihati was found hanging at his home, adding that he had been depressed since the announcement of the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. Condemning the BJP's 'politics of fear and division,' Banerjee said its 'venomous propaganda' had pushed citizens to despair. She reiterated that Bengal 'will never allow NRC' and vowed to protect the dignity and rights of its people. —*PTI*

United Oppn calls for SIR boycott

T'PURAM/KOLKATA, 28 OCT

PHOTO: ANI

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday urged all who value democracy to unite against the Election Commission of India's (ECI) Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voters' list, calling it a grave threat to democratic foundations. Vijayan warned that extending the SIR to multiple states represents an attempt to undermine universal suffrage and manipulate electoral rolls for political gain.

He said the move, based on outdated lists from 2002–04, violates the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. Kerala's Chief Electoral Officer had already cautioned that such a revision was impractical as the state prepared for local elections. "Pressing ahead despite warnings raises suspicions about the purpose behind the move," Vijayan said, adding that it could become a "backdoor implementation of the NRC." He noted that Kerala's Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution opposing the process.

Joining the criticism, Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee accused the BJP and the EC of turning the SIR into a "Silent Invisible Rigging" mechanism to "exclude" genuine voters before the 2026 Bengal polls. He alleged that the process was dictated by the ruling party at the Centre, saying, "Earlier people used to elect the government; now they want to select who will vote."

Banerjee challenged the EC's short timeline for the massive task and warned of protests if a single legitimate voter was removed. "If one eligible name is deleted, one lakh people will stage a dharna outside the EC office," he said. —*PTI*

UT status bars J&K from having Lokayukta: Omar

SRINAGAR, 28 OCT

Jammu and Kashmir's Union Territory status prevents it from appointing a Lokayukta, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah told the Assembly on Tuesday, stressing that only states are empowered to establish such an anti-corruption body. Responding to a private member's Bill by CPI(M) MLA MY Tarigami, he said Section 63 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, applies solely to states. "When we become a state, we will do it. But as a UT, it will be difficult," he noted, adding that J&K already comes under central laws and the Anti-Corruption Bureau's ambit. Tarigami later withdrew his Bill after the government's objection.

During the session, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather reminded legislators that questions relating to departments under the Lieutenant Governor cannot be raised under the J&K Reorganisation Act. A query on ex-gratia payments to victims' families was consequently deleted. It also informed that efforts were underway to promote Hindi as one of the UT's official languages. —*PTI*

IN SNUB TO CHINA

East Asia Summit urges peaceful dispute resolution

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

PHOTO: PTI

The East Asia Summit (EAS) in Malaysia has called for disputes to be resolved peacefully in accordance with international law, in what is seen as a veiled message to China over its assertive actions in the South China Sea.

The declaration, adopted at the annual summit in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, underscored the need to enhance mutual trust and ensure peace in the region. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar represented India at the meeting, which included ASEAN member states along with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the US and Russia.

The statement also reflected regional unease over Beijing's expansive claims in the South China Sea, a region rich in hydrocarbons and vital shipping lanes. Several ASEAN nations, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have overlapping territorial claims, while India and other democracies have repeatedly urged adherence to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In his address, Jaishankar highlighted growing challenges to fair market access, energy security and trade norms. "Energy trade is increasingly constricted, with resulting market distortions. Principles are applied selectively and what is preached is not necessarily practised," he said. —*PTI*

Vijay blasts DMK over farmers' losses

CHENNAI, 28 OCT

- Vijay mocked Stalin's earlier remark, "Nannum Deltakaran dan" ("I also belong to the Cauvery delta region"), calling it "empty publicity"

Actor-politician Vijay on Tuesday strongly criticised the MK Stalin-led DMK government over extensive crop damage in Tamil Nadu's Cauvery delta region, accusing it of failing to protect farmers' interests. The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) founder said that paddy crops had sprouted and gone to waste after being drenched by rain due to delays in government procurement, particularly in districts such as Thanjavur.

Vijay mocked Stalin's earlier remark, "Nannum Deltakaran dan" ("I also belong to the Cauvery delta region"), calling it "empty publicity" and questioning what real action had followed. He demanded answers on the steps taken to prevent monsoon-related crop losses, and what storage and protection measures were in place for paddy.

"The government has betrayed farmers by failing to act on time," Vijay said, warning that public anger against the DMK would only grow. —*PTI*

'Ensure ex-Agniveers are recruited by pvt agencies'

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

PHOTO: ANI

The Centre has asked all states and Union territories to ensure the recruitment of ex-Agniveers into private security agencies and training institutes as they have experience working in the armed forces, officials said on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Home Affairs communication has been sent to all states and UTs as part of the further career progression of ex-Agniveers on completion of their term with the armed forces.

In June 2022, the government rolled out the Agnipath recruitment scheme with the aim of bringing down the age profile of the three services.

The Agnipath scheme provides for recruiting youths between the age bracket of 17-and-a-half years and 21 years for four years, with a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for 15 more years. The first batch of Agniveers will end their four-year term next year.

It further said, "Agniveers have an experience of about four years in service. Hence, they may be given preference by the private security agencies during engagement/employment of private security guards and supervisors." —*PTI*

Centre raises non-urea fertiliser subsidy

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

The Centre has increased subsidies on phosphorous (P) and sulphur (S) fertilisers for the 2025–26 rabi season, approving a higher allocation of Rs 37,952 crore to support farmers.

However, subsidy rates for nitrogen (N) and potash (K) remain unchanged. The Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, raised the subsidy for phosphate to Rs 47.96 per kg from Rs 43.60 and for sulphur to Rs 2.87 from Rs 1.77 per kg.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the new subsidy is about Rs 14,000 crore higher than last rabi's Rs 24,000 crore outlay. The decision aims to offset rising global prices of fertiliser nutrients. —PTI

SEEKS BAN ON FILM

'Taj Story' based on my HC plea: BJP man

AYODHYA, 28 OCT

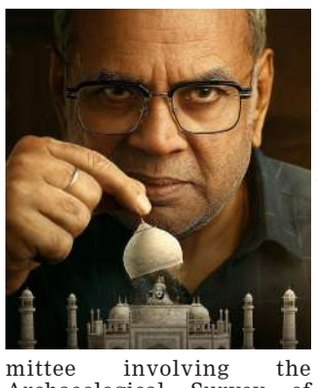


PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

- Rajneesh Singh, a BJP spokesperson from Ayodhya, filed a petition in Allahabad High Court in 2022, seeking the opening of 22 locked rooms inside the Taj Mahal, claiming the monument was originally a temple.

A BJP leader from Ayodhya has filed a complaint with the I&B Ministry and the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), seeking a ban on the upcoming film 'The Taj Story' starring Paresh Rawal, claiming that it is based on the subject of a petition he filed in the high court.

Rajneesh Singh, a BJP spokesperson from Ayodhya, filed a petition in the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court in October 2022, seeking the opening of 22 locked rooms inside the Taj Mahal, claiming the monument was originally a temple.

The petition, in which he sought the formation of a committee involving the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to give clarity on the 17th-century monument, was dismissed by the high court in May 2022.

In his complaint, Singh said, "I filed a PIL for opening the 22 closed rooms in the Taj Mahal. My objective was solely to ensure transparency and verification of historical facts. I have come to know that the movie 'The Taj Story' is based on the subject of my petition."

He also claimed that the film's posters, promotional material, and storyline make references to the judicial subject and the petition in a "misleading" manner without obtaining permission from him.

Additionally, Singh urged the board for an immediate release of Actor Diljit Dosanjh starred film 'Punjab '95', expressing distress over the ongoing "withholding" of the movie, said sources.

According to sources, the movie which is based on the life of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, has been waiting for certification from CBFC for its release in India. —*Agencies*

Pak woman gets Indian citizenship after 20 yrs

RAMPUR/LUCKNOW, 28 OCT

Nearly two decades after leaving Pakistan, 38-year-old Poonam, who has been living in Rampur on a long-term visa, has finally been granted Indian citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, a Deepavali gift her family calls unforgettable.

Poonam came to India in 2004 with her brother Gagan from Pakistan's Swat region amid rising militancy. While her brother obtained citizenship in 2016, her application faced repeated rejections before approval this year. After arriving in India, she lived briefly in Delhi before settling in Rampur. In 2005, she married local businessman Puneet Kumar, and the couple have one child.

Until 2013, she visited her family in Mingora, but could not renew her passport without a valid Pakistani ID. "It feels like a festival gift for our family. The timing made this Diwali even more special," Puneet told PTI, adding they will soon complete the remaining formalities in Lucknow.

Poonam said she now plans to get her Aadhaar and PAN cards. "The next time I visit Swat, it will be as an Indian citizen carrying an Indian passport," she said proudly. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Katra locals protest ropeway project in Vaishno Devi

JAMMU, 28 OCT

Protests broke out in Jammu and Kashmir's Katra town on Tuesday against the proposed Rs 250-crore Vaishno Devi ropeway project. Locals, including youths, staged a dharna carrying pictures of Mata Vaishno Devi and banners reading "No to Ropeway", warning they would resume a chain hunger strike if the plan isn't scrapped. Residents claim the ropeway, connecting Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat along the 12-km shrine route, will hit the livelihoods of over 60,000 families, including hoteliers, shopkeepers, pony operators, and labourers. Protesters accused the administration of reneging on its promise to consult locals before approval. Last December, Katra had observed a week-long shutdown and hunger strike over the same issue. *—PTI*

2 dead, 10 hurt as bus touches powerline in Jaipur

JAIPUR, 28 OCT

Two people were killed and 10 others injured after a private bus caught fire upon coming in contact with a high-tension wire in the Manoharpur area of Jaipur on Tuesday. The bus, carrying over 50 labourers from Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit to a brick kiln, caught fire when household goods placed on its roof touched a live wire while travelling on a village road. Gas cylinders on board also exploded, intensifying the blaze. Several passengers managed to jump to safety. The injured were taken to a hospital in Shahpura, with six later referred to Jaipur's SMS Hospital. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma expressed condolences and ordered proper treatment for the injured, while Deputy CM Prem Chand Bairwa announced an inquiry into the incident. *—PTI*

Cough syrup case: Medical rep arrested in MP

CHHINDWARA, 28 OCT

A medical representative of Tamil Nadu-based Sresan Pharma has been arrested in connection with the deaths of 24 children in Madhya Pradesh linked to contaminated cough syrup, police said on Tuesday. Satish Verma was detained from Chhindwara for his alleged role in promoting the company's Coldrif syrup, which reportedly contained excessive levels of toxic diethylene glycol. Police have arrested six persons so far, including company owner G Ranganathan and Dr Praveen Soni, who prescribed the syrup. The Tamil Nadu government has cancelled Sresan Pharma's licence, while several states, including Madhya Pradesh, have banned the product. The SIT is probing the tragedy. *—PTI*

Custody of five accused in Zubeen case extended

GUWAHATI, 28 OCT

A local court in Guwahati on Tuesday extended the judicial custody of five accused in singer Zubeen Garg's death case by 14 days. The accused include North East India Festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, Garg's manager Siddhartha Sharma, his cousin and police officer Sandipan Garg, and two security officers, Nandeswar Bora and Prabin Baishya. Currently lodged in Baksa jail, they were produced virtually before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Kamrup Metropolitan. Garg died while swimming in Singapore on 19 September, where he had gone to attend the North East India Festival. Seven people have been arrested so far, with two others held in Haflong jail. A 10-member team of SIT of Assam CID, led by Special DGP Munna Prasad Gupta, is investigating the case. *—PTI*

Society won't forgive us if we ignore our doctors: SC

Court reserves verdict on plea for pvt docs' Covid cover

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said "society will not forgive the judiciary if it fails to protect doctors" as it reserved its verdict on pleas seeking inclusion of private doctors and health workers who died fighting Covid-19 under the government's insurance cover.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and R Mahadevan said private practitioners, too, had served during the pandemic and should not be excluded from the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) merely because they were not on government duty. The court asked the Centre to submit data on similar or parallel schemes, stating it would frame principles for insurers to decide claims based on its judgment.

The plea followed a 2021 Bombay High Court order denying benefits to private hospital staff unless their services were requisitioned by the government. One petitioner, Kiran Bhaskar Surgade, lost her husband, a Thane-based doctor, to Covid-19, but his insurance claim was rejected since his clinic was not designated a Covid hospital. The PMGKP provides Rs 50 lakh cover to health workers who died in Covid duty.

A bench of Justices said private practitioners, too had served during pandemic PHOTO: PTI

In a separate hearing, a bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria criticised the NMC for failing to ensure timely stipend payments to medical interns across the country.

The court observed that interns often work more than 18 hours a day and "stipend is the bare minimum they deserve." It directed the NMC to file a compliance affidavit within two weeks, detailing steps taken to ensure all colleges adhere to its July 2025 circular mandating stipend payments. *— PTI*

SC directs PIL of mental healthcare act to NHRC

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

The Supreme Court on Tuesday transferred to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) a PIL seeking implementation of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, directing the rights body to monitor compliance.

A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and R Mahadevan noted that statutory authorities such as the Central and State Mental Health Authorities and Review Boards have been constituted. The petition, filed by advocate Gaurav Kumar Bansal in 2018, alleged violations of the Act, including chaining of mentally ill persons in a faith-based asylum in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun district.

The court called such practices a violation of Article 21, which guarantees life and personal liberty, and said the dignity of persons with mental illness cannot be compromised. *—PTI*

SC begins hearing plea of civil judges

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

The Supreme Court on Tuesday began hearing on framing uniform criteria for determining seniority and promotions in higher judicial services, addressing long-pending concerns over limited career progression of entry-level judges.

A five-judge Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice BR Gavai noted that many civil judges never reach the level of principal district judge, discouraging young lawyers from joining the lower judiciary. The issue, part of a 1989 plea by the All India Judges Association, seeks nationwide uniformity in service conditions, pay scales, and promotions.

Amicus curiae Siddharth Bhatnagar highlighted disparities, saying direct district judge recruits dominate higher posts. The Bench said it will hear arguments from both sides on 28 and 29 October. *—PTI*

NDRF DEPLOYED

A fisherman walks along the shoreline past secured boats, taking precautionary measures during the impact of Cyclone Montha, in Chennai PHOTO: PTI

Cyclone Montha batters east coast, Odisha on high alert

BHUBANESHWAR, 28 OCT

Severe cyclonic storm Montha made landfall near Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday evening, bringing heavy rain, gusty winds and widespread damage across coastal and southern Odisha districts.

The storm, packing winds of 90–100kmph gusting to 110kmph, uprooted trees, damaged houses and triggered landslides in Gajapati, Rayagada, and Malkangiri districts. Normal life was hit in 15 districts, officials said.

In Gajapati, a cyclone shelter worker died after falling ill while helping residents evacuate, while one person was injured when a mud house collapsed in Mohana. The IMD said the landfall process would continue for three to four hours before the storm weakens into a deep depression.

CM Mohan Charan Majhi reviewed preparedness and said over 2,000 shelters had been opened, housing 11,000 evacuees. "Our goal is zero casualty," he said, adding that 153 rescue teams, including 6,000 personnel from NDRF, ODRAF and Fire Services, were deployed.

In Tamil Nadu, the Regional Meteorology Centre issued storm warnings for major ports, declared school holidays, and cautioned fishermen against venturing into the sea. West Bengal's Met office forecast heavy rain in south Bengal districts till Friday.

The NDRF has stationed 45 teams across Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, TN, and Telangana, with 20 more on standby. Railways cancelled over 60 trains. *— Agencies*

Ladakh lifts curbs on gatherings after weeks

LADAKH, 28 OCT

Authorities in Ladakh have lifted restrictions imposed under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, which prohibited the assembly of five or more people.

The curbs were initially enforced across the Union Territory on 24 September, following widespread violence in Leh that left four people dead and several others injured. After being withdrawn briefly, they were reimposed on 17 October, when the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance called for renewed protests demanding statehood and constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule.

Talks between the two groups and the Centre resumed on 22 October, after a five-month pause, shortly after the Ministry of Home Affairs announced a judicial inquiry into the September violence. Following police reports confirming no imminent threat to peace, Leh DM Romil Singh Donk and Kargil DM Rakesh Kumar separately ordered the withdrawal of the restrictions on Monday. *—PTI*

Delhi conducts 1st cloud-seeding trial

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

Delhi on Tuesday conducted its first cloud-seeding trial in a bid to ease worsening air pollution, with the aircraft taking off from Kanpur and heading to northwest Delhi's Burari.

Officials said the Rs 250-crore exercise would proceed depending on cloud and moisture conditions, after which the aircraft will be stationed at Meerut airport.

Cloud seeding is a weather modification technique where particles like silver iodide or chemical salts are released into clouds to induce rainfall. Researchers from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, explain that the process differs based on temperature, silver iodide is used in cold clouds, while sodium or potassium chloride works in warmer ones.

An aircraft fires flares during cloud-seeding trial, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

Though past experiments have shown rainfall enhancement of around 17 percent, scientists caution that global evidence on its effectiveness remains limited. Environmental studies have also flagged concerns over residual silver toxicity and carbon emissions from dry ice used in the process.

Meanwhile, Delhi's air quality remained in the 'very poor' category with an AQI of 305 on Tuesday, as 27 of 38 stations reported readings above 300. The IMD recorded a minimum temperature of 20°C and 95 per cent humidity. *— Agencies*

- Though past experiments have shown rainfall enhancement of around 17%, scientists caution that global evidence on its effectiveness remains limited

Manipur village chief dies after being assaulted by armed men

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

A village chief in Manipur's Churachandpur district was allegedly assaulted to death by unidentified men suspected to be members of the United Kuki National Army (UKNA), police said on Tuesday.

The victim, Mangthang Haokip, 50, was the chief of T Khonomphai village in Henglep sub-division.

The attack occurred around 4.30pm on Monday. Villagers attempted to carry him to Churachandpur District Hospital, but he succumbed to his injuries while being transported through Khaopijang village.

Police have registered a case at Henglep police station, and an investigation is underway.

The body was later handed over to villagers after post-mortem formalities.

- Security officials suspect that cadres of UKNA, a banned militant group not part of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact with the Centre and the Manipur government, carried out the attack. The group was involved in multiple recent assaults in the region.

Security officials suspect that cadres of UKNA, a banned militant group not part of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact with the Centre and the Manipur government, carried out the attack.

The group was allegedly involved in multiple recent assaults in the region.

In June 2024, UKNA had claimed responsibility for an ambush that killed three Kuki militants and an elderly woman near Mongjang village, about 5km from Churachandpur headquarters.

Following its alleged role in the ongoing ethnic violence, the Manipur government withdrew the SoO agreement with UKNA in 2023.

The Henglep Headquarters Area Chiefs' Association (HACA) strongly condemned the killing.

The association further called the incident "unfortunate" amid continuing ethnic unrest that has claimed over 260 lives and displaced more than 60,000 people since May 2023. *—PTI*

PROBE ON

Parked AI bus catches fire at Delhi airport, no casualties

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

A fire broke out in an Air India bus parked near Terminal 3 of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police (IGI) Vichitra Veer, the bus was empty at the time of the incident, with only the driver present.

The fire was reported around 1pm to the IGI Airport Police Station, after which fire tenders, police, and CISF personnel rushed to the scene.

The blaze was swiftly brought under control, preventing it from spreading.

Charred remains of an Air India SATS bus which caught fire near a parked aircraft at Delhi PHOTO: PTI

No injuries or casualties were reported, though the bus, used for ferrying passengers within the airport premises, sustained damage.

The area was temporarily cordoned off as a precaution. A technical examination of the vehicle is being conducted to determine the exact cause of the fire.Police confirmed that operations at the airport remained unaffected while further investigation into the incident is underway. *—PTI*

HER PHONE WIPED OUT?

Satara doctor suicide: Locals observe bandh

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 28 OCT

Residents of Wadwani in Maharashtra's Beed district observed a bandh on Tuesday, demanding a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into the alleged suicide of a 28-year-old woman doctor from the region.

The doctor was found hanging in a Phaltan hotel room in Satara district on 23 October, leaving a note written on her palm accusing police sub-inspector Gopal Badane of repeatedly raping her and software engineer Prashant Bankar of mental harassment. Both were arrested on 25 October.

Protesters held a march from Shivaji Maharaj Chowk to the tehsil office and submitted a memorandum demanding an SIT probe and a fast-track trial in Beed instead of Phaltan. "Other officials are also involved; they must face action," an activist alleged.

- The deceased doctor's family alleged that her mobile phone was accessed using her fingerprint after her death, erasing vital information. Also, claimed her WhatsApp 'last seen'

Family members echoed these demands, questioning the handling of evidence and Badane's surrender before Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's visit. Opposition leaders, including Congress's Rajani Patil and Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sushma Andhare, also demanded an impartial probe, calling the death an institutional failure. Maharashtra Women's Commission chairperson Rupali Chakankar said police were examining call records, message exchanges, and the rape allegations.

The bandh was peaceful and limited to Wadwani, police said, even as the demand for accountability and justice gained statewide traction.

The deceased doctor's family alleged that her mobile phone was accessed using her fingerprint after her death, erasing vital information. They claimed her WhatsApp "last seen" status showed activity posthumously, suggesting tampering. "We suspect someone deleted key data before we arrived," her uncle said. The family has urged authorities to recover the deleted information and ensure the trial is moved to Beed for impartiality. Government representative Dr Omprakash Shete assured them the chief minister would be informed. *—PTI*

Dad, DU student booked for 'faking' acid attack

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

Delhi Police on Tuesday questioned a 20-year-old BCom student who allegedly faked an acid attack on herself at her father's behest to frame a man accused of filing a rape complaint against him.

CCTV footage showed no attackers, no acid traces PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

The student, enrolled with DU's Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board, had claimed three men threw acid on her near Ashok Vihar on Sunday. However, CCTV footage showed no attackers, and forensic experts found no acid traces or bottles at the spot. Investigation revealed she had poured toilet cleaner on her own hand.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bhisham Singh said the woman's father, Akil Khan, was arrested for orchestrating the hoax to avenge a rape case filed by Jitender's wife, who once worked at Khan's factory.

"It is now clear Jitender was not involved," Singh said, adding that more suspects linked to the plot are being traced and strict action will follow into the matter. *—PTI*

Will Delhi's bet to beat smog with cloud seeding pay off?

As Delhi prepares to conduct cloud seeding experiments in a desperate bid to combat choking air pollution, the move has reignited debate over the science, effectiveness, and ethics of weather modification.

The Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi is gearing up for a series of artificial rain trials aimed at reducing toxic smog. While the technology is not new, India has experimented with cloud seeding since the 1950s, questions remain about whether it can truly clean the air or simply offer a fleeting respite.

A history of experiments

India's tryst with cloud seeding began in the early 1950s, primarily as a drought management measure. Over the decades, several states, including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh, have undertaken such operations to augment rainfall in water-scarce regions.

In recent years, however, the technology's appeal has expanded beyond drought relief. With Delhi's winter air turning increasingly toxic, successive governments have explored artificial rain as an emergency pollution-control measure.

The idea, though, has often been grounded by bureaucratic delays, unsuitable weather, or lack of coordination between agencies. In 2025, the Delhi government revived the plan by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT Kanpur to conduct five cloud-seeding trials in northwest Delhi. The project, cleared by 23 departments including the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), will see IIT Kanpur deploy its own aircraft for the operations.

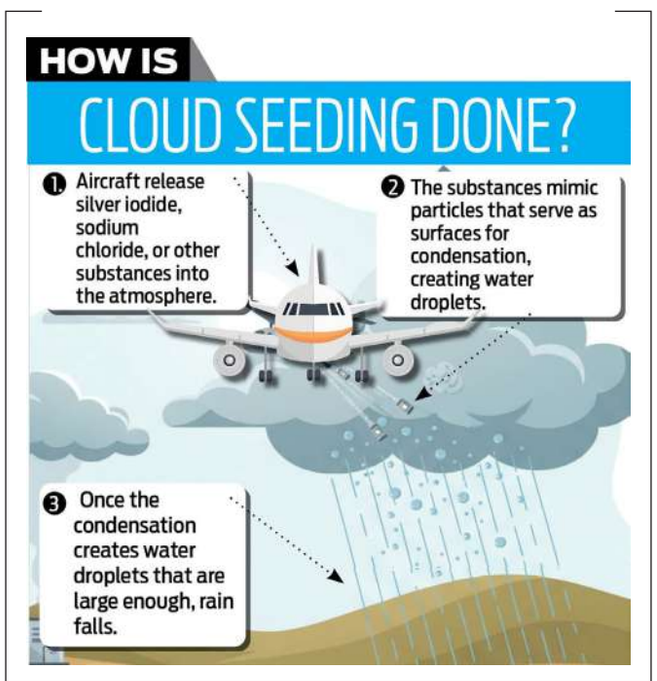
WHAT IS CLOUD SEEDING?

Cloud seeding is a weather modification technique designed to enhance precipitation by dispersing specific chemicals into existing clouds. These act as artificial condensation nuclei, around which moisture condenses to form larger droplets or ice crystals, ultimately resulting in rainfall.

Common seeding agents include silver iodide, which mimics the crystalline structure of ice; potassium iodide, an alternative nucleating material; dry ice (solid carbon dioxide), which cools surrounding air; and sodium chloride, which encourages droplet formation in warmer clouds.

Typically, aircraft disperse these agents directly into target cloud systems. In some instances, ground-based generators or even drones are used, depending on wind conditions that can lift aerosols into the cloud layer.

However, cloud seeding is not a magic wand. It cannot create clouds but only enhance existing ones. For successful seeding, a set of strict meteorological preconditions must be met — including moisture-rich clouds, supercooled water droplets, favourable winds, and suitable humidity levels.


HOW IS
CLOUD SEEDING DONE?
1 Aircraft release silver iodide, sodium chloride, or other substances into the atmosphere.
2 The substances mimic particles that serve as surfaces for condensation, creating water droplets.
3 Once the condensation creates water droplets that are large enough, rain falls.

DANGEROUS SIDE EFFECTS OF CLOUD SEEDING CHEMICALS

Cloud seeding is a weather modification method that enhances rainfall by dispersing chemicals into clouds using aircraft. These allow water vapour to condense into droplets or ice crystals that trigger rain. However, the chemicals used can damage environmental and cause health side effects

SILVER IODIDE
- Inhaling fine particles can worsen asthma or bronchitis.
- Airborne particles may cause skin & eye irritation.
- Can accumulate in soil and water, harming crops and
- It is insoluble in water and is toxic to aquatic life including bacteria and algae. It also causes gill damage in fish.

SODIUM CHLORIDE
- Raises soil salt levels, stunting crop growth.
- Runoff from rain can disrupt aquatic ecosystems.
- Salt residues left from rain can corrode aircraft, equipment and metal structures.

POTASSIUM CHLORIDE
- Excess potassium affects nutrient imbalance in soil.
- High levels may impact aquatic organisms.
- Can increase soil salinity, which reduces water uptake of soil, therefore, restricting plan growth.

METEOROLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

The first requirement for artificial rain is the presence of moisture-laden clouds that have not yet precipitated. Accurate forecasting of such cloud systems is critical.
- Sufficient moisture: Target clouds must contain adequate water vapour, often at least 50 per cent humidity.
- Cloud structure: Clouds should have a minimum vertical thickness of around 1 km. For cold-cloud seeding, temperatures must range between −20°C and −7°C, while warm-cloud seeding is done above freezing levels.
- Wind conditions: Winds must carry seeding materials toward the desired area without being too strong to disperse the agents.
- Vertical updrafts: Clouds with strong upward air currents are ideal, as they help distribute seeding particles and enhance cloud development.

MONSOON CONTEXT AND LIMITATIONS

The Indian monsoon season offers favourable conditions for seeding, given its abundant moisture and cloud cover. This period has been used to target rain-deficient zones.

Yet, it also complicates matters. Natural rainfall during the monsoon makes it difficult to isolate the effects of cloud seeding. Moreover, rapidly changing atmospheric conditions can disrupt operations. There's also the risk of excess rainfall or local flooding if the process is not carefully controlled.

APPLICATIONS

Cloud seeding today is viewed as a short-term or emergency intervention in three key areas:
1. Drought relief: Augmenting rainfall to aid agriculture and water security in dry regions.
2. Air quality improvement: Artificial rain can help wash particulate matter and pollutants from the atmosphere.
3. Agricultural stabilisation: Supplementing natural rainfall during delayed or weak monsoons

Limitations

Despite its promise, cloud seeding remains uncertain in its outcomes. Its success depends heavily on weather conditions, cloud quality, and timing, factors often beyond human control.

Key limitations
- It cannot induce rain where suitable clouds are absent.
- The duration of relief is short; air pollution often rebounds within days.
- Quantifying results is difficult since it's hard to prove that induced rain was not natural.
- Environmental risks exist due to the chemicals used.
- Ethical and legal issues arise from altering local weather patterns, potentially affecting neighbouring regions.

Experts warn that relying on artificial rain may divert attention from long-term solutions like stricter emissions control, cleaner fuels, and sustainable urban planning.

Experiments abroad

Delhi's plan is not without precedent. In December 2023, Pakistan, with assistance from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), attempted cloud seeding over Lahore. The results were mixed — it drizzled lightly over parts of the city, briefly lowering the Air Quality Index from over 300 to 189. But within days, pollution levels rebounded. The UAE, meanwhile, has seen greater success thanks to its favourable meteorological conditions. It targets moisture-rich clouds using hygroscopic salts and silver iodide. The geographical advantage and consistent cloud systems make seeding more viable there. Delhi, by contrast, faces the challenge of infrequent clouds, low humidity, and unpredictable winter weather, making operations largely experimental.

THE WAY FORWARD

Experts agree that cloud seeding should be treated as an emergency measure, not a routine policy. It may be useful when air quality indices reach hazardous levels or during extreme droughts, but its use must be guided by scientific validation and strict oversight.

Real-time satellite data, Doppler radar tracking, and high-resolution meteorological modelling are essential to ensure accuracy and accountability. The government must develop standard operating procedures for implementation, monitoring, and post-event evaluation. A clear regulatory framework is also needed to ensure ethical governance, environmental safety, and transparency in weather modification programmes.

—Down To Earth

SALAR ساہر

Democrats start the race for 2028 primary shake-up

Not even a year out from the last presidential election, the Democratic National Committee has begun setting up a framework for the party's next round of presidential primary elections, which could upend the early-voting calendar yet again.

The Rules and Bylaws Committee of the Democratic National Committee on Monday approved a plan giving states until 16 January to submit applications to hold voting contests in the early window ahead of Super Tuesday, when a massive haul of delegates will be awarded.

Four or five states will get an early slot, and all four regions — East, Midwest, South and West — must be represented, according to the framework.

No huge tranche of delegates is necessarily at stake in the early-voting contests, but their heft has traditionally played a pivotal role for candidates seeking to lead their parties, with heavy travel rotations meaning high visibility for the states involved.

"We are committed to executing a fair and transparent process that will deliver a battle-tested nominee who will win back the White House for Democrats," the committee co-chairs Minyon Moore and James Roosevelt Jr said.

It will be months, and potentially years, before the 2028 calendar is set. In June, several members of new DNC Chairman Ken Martin's leadership team said the party was considering scrambling its voting order for the next election cycle. That also happened in 2024, when, at President Joe Biden's behest, South Carolina hosted the Democrats' first-in-the-nation contest, giving the incumbent president a resounding win in the state that had helped resurrect his flagging campaign four years earlier.

That move was also a nod to the party's loyal base of Black voters, while adding Georgia and Michigan to the so-called early window.

At some level, the next presidential primary has already begun, informally, at least. A half dozen presidential prospects have already begun to make early pilgrimages to the states that topped the calendar last time: South Carolina, New Hampshire and Iowa chief among them.

As Democratic officials gathered in Martin's home state of Minnesota for their summer meeting earlier this year, there were several private conversations about whether South Carolina, which is a reliably Republican state, should be replaced by another Southern state that is considered a swing state in the general election. North Carolina and Georgia are considered the early favourites if a change is made.

Martin himself said South Carolina could lose its top spot. But he expressed confidence that a state with a large Black population, if not South Carolina, would be featured prominently in the Democrats' next nomination process.

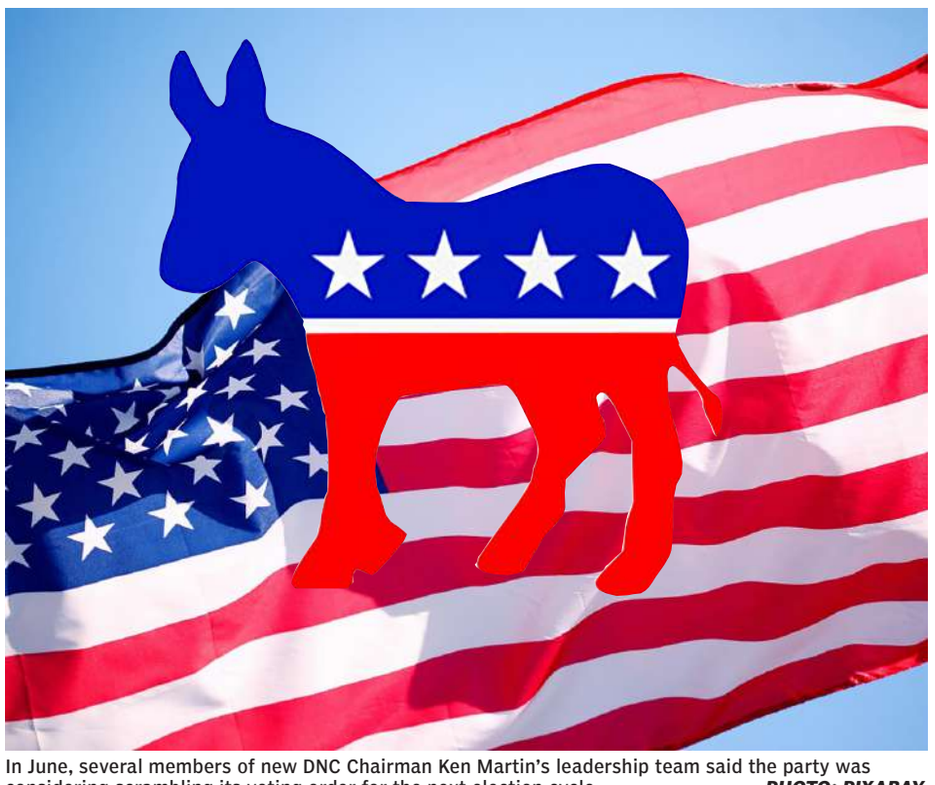
"Clearly, the most reliable constituency of the Democratic Party are Black voters, and they will have a prominent role in the selection of our nominee," Martin said then. "And whether it's South Carolina or some other states, rest assured that making sure that there's a state in the mix that actually will battle test your nominee with African American voters is really critical to making sure we can win in November."

New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Ray Buckley, one of the few veterans who retained their seat on Rules and Bylaws, previously noted that New Hampshire is bound by state law to host the nation's opening presidential primary election regardless of the DNC's wishes.

New Hampshire, of course, bucked the DNC's 2024 calendar. And Iowa has threatened to go rogue as well in 2028 if it's skipped over again.

In a release issued after Monday's vote, Nevada State Democratic Party Executive Director Hilary Barrett said her state should go first, calling Nevada "the only state that meets all of the DNC's new early state criteria set forth with unmatchable rigorousness, efficiency, and fairness."

Christale Spain, chair of South Carolina's Democratic Party, advocated for her state to yet again lead the calendar, saying in a statement that "South Carolina's diverse electorate highlights the importance of amplifying the voices of historically underrepresented communities." *—PTI*



In June, several members of new DNC Chairman Ken Martin's leadership team said the party was considering scrambling its voting order for the next election cycle **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Sikh woman's 'racially aggravated' rape shocks Indians in the UK

The residents of the quiet, leafy Park Hall neighbourhood in England's Walsall are in shock after an Indian-origin woman was allegedly raped in a "racially aggravated" attack over the weekend.

A 32-year-old man arrested on suspicion of rape remains in custody as police continue to question him over the attack on the woman in her 20s on Saturday evening.

Walsall, where the incident took place, is about 220 kilometres from London and is located in the West Midlands region.

"The racially aggravated rape in Walsall is a horrific crime. My thoughts are with the victim and her family," UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said in a post.

"I know the fear that will be felt by the local Sikhs. I've sought assurances from the police and leaders that they are doing all they can to support everyone impacted by this crime.

"I urge anyone with more information on the attack to come forward and contact West Midlands Police as soon as possible," she said.

The local councillors in Walsall had a meeting scheduled with the police on Monday evening to get updates on the progress of their investigation.

"I am shocked and frustrated because what happened to the young lady is intolerable," said Councillor Ram K Mehmi, a community leader and founder-trustee of the local Shri Guru Ravidass Temple in Darlaston.

"I have been living here for 61 years and have never, ever heard of such an incident. The local community are getting concerned because this is the second (racially aggravated) attack in the West Midlands," he said.

On Sunday, the police released CCTV footage of the suspect, described as a white male in his 30s, after they were called to the Park Hall area of Walsall on Saturday evening following concerns for the welfare of a woman in distress in the street.

"I am absolutely shocked to hear about this. A customer informed me about it and I couldn't believe such a thing could happen in this peaceful neighbourhood," said an Indian-origin shopkeeper in Park Hall, Walsall, on condition of anonymity.

"I am from India and have been living here for a few years. It's a diverse area and there have never been any race-related troubles," he said.

The West Midlands Police have condemned the "absolutely appalling attack" on the young woman.

On Sunday, the force released CCTV footage of the suspect, a White male in his 30s, as part of an urgent public appeal for information **PHOTO: WESTMIDLANDS.POLICE.UK**

"We have teams of officers recovering evidence and building a profile of the attacker so that he can be brought into custody as soon as possible. While we are following multiple lines of enquiry right now, it's vital that we get to hear from anyone who saw a man acting suspiciously in the area at the time," Detective Superintendent (DS) Ronan Tyrer, who is overseeing the investigation, had said on Sunday.

Chief Superintendent Phil Dolby of Walsall Police acknowledged the "fear and concern" the attack had caused within the "diverse community".

- A 32-year-old man arrested on suspicion of rape remains in custody as police continue to question him over the attack on the woman in her 20s on Saturday evening. Walsall, where the incident took place, is about 220 kilometres from London and is located in the West Midlands region.

"There will be an increased policing presence in the coming days," he said, in an attempt to reassure the locals.

Sikh Federation UK has established that the victim of Saturday's attack is a Sikh student in her 20s.

"The attacker apparently broke down the door of the house where she was living... West Midlands Police have now had two racially aggravated rapes of young women in their 20s in the last two months and urgently need to find those responsible," the organisation said.

The force has made a few arrests before releasing the suspects on bail in their investigation into the racially aggravated rape of a British Sikh woman in Oldbury last month.

"As a woman, a Sikh, and a first-generation immigrant, I am heartbroken by this second racially motivated sexual attack in as many months," said Sanam Arora, chair of the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK.

"Britain's strength lies in its diversity, in the fact that people of every colour and creed can live, study, and thrive together. That spirit of inclusion must be protected at all costs.

"I urge all leaders – political, institutional, and community – to be mindful of the climate we create through our words and actions. We must not allow divisive or dehumanising rhetoric to embolden prejudice or violence. Our response must be unity, vigilance, and compassion," she said.

Preet Kaur Gill and Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, both British Sikh Labour MPs, took to social media to express their shock and condemnation at a feared "repeated pattern" of violent attacks on women in the region and urged the public to assist the police investigation. *—DW*

QUOTE of THE DAY

I would love to (run for a third term as US President). I have the best numbers ever. But I haven't really thought about it

—**Donald Trump,** US President

US, Japan sign rare earth mineral deal

Trump, Takaichi agree on 15% tariffs in exchange for $555B Japanese investment in US

TOKYO, 28 OCT

US President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Tuesday signed two major agreements after their bilateral meeting, one centred on trade and the other on critical minerals.

The first deal, described as brief, called for a "new golden age" in the US-Japan alliance and referenced the trade pact Trump announced in July. Under that arrangement, a 15 per cent tariff will apply to Japanese exports in exchange for USD 550 billion in Japanese investment in the US. The second agreement established a framework to secure the supply of critical and rare-earth minerals through cooperation in mining and processing.

Trump warmly greeted the new Japanese Prime Minister, as the two complimented each other. Takaichi said Japan would give Washington 250 cherry trees next year to honour America's 250th anniversary, as well as fireworks from Akita Prefecture for 4 July.

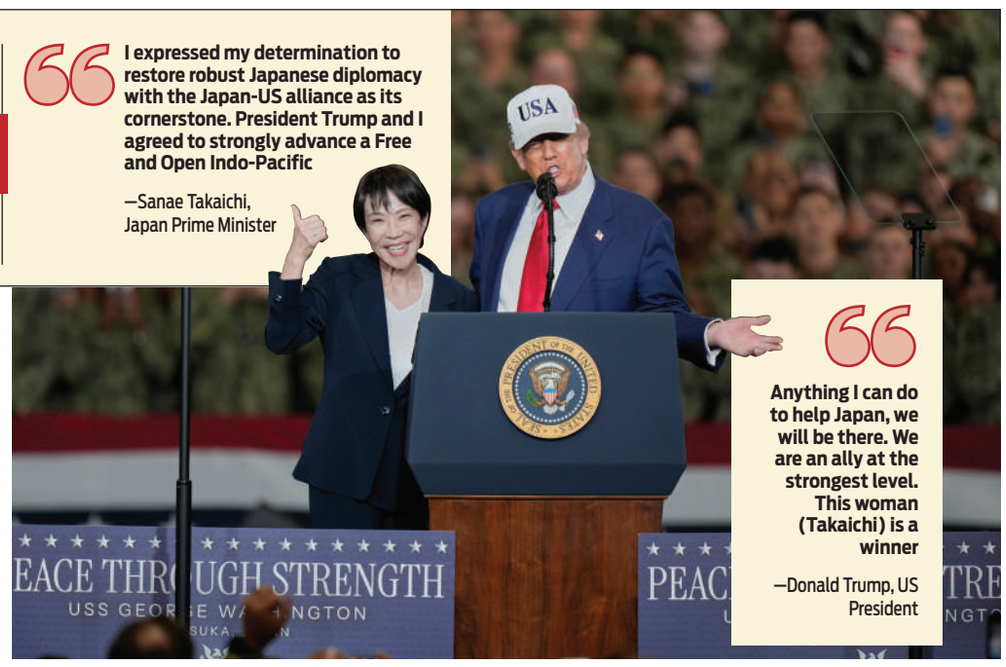
At a dinner for business leaders in Tokyo, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick announced up to USD 490 billion in commitments, including USD 100 billion each for nuclear projects involving Westinghouse and GE Vernova. —*Agencies*

JAPAN PM NOMINATES TRUMP FOR NOBEL PEACE

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told US President Donald Trump that she has nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize, the White House said. "President succeeded in securing a ceasefire deal between Thailand and Cambodia... also, the deal you have recently achieved in the Middle East is an unprecedented, historic achievement," said Takaichi.

Japan's PM Sanae Takaichi and US President Donald Trump signed 'Japan is back' caps, a phrase coined by late leader Shinzo Abe's. Takaichi gifted Trump golf legend Hideki Matsuyama's putter **PHOTO: X**

> **I expressed my determination to restore robust Japanese diplomacy with the Japan-US alliance as its cornerstone. President Trump and I agreed to strongly advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific**
>
> —Sanae Takaichi, Japan Prime Minister



> **Anything I can do to help Japan, we will be there. We are an ally at the strongest level. This woman (Takaichi) is a winner**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and US President Donald Trump during their visit to the aircraft carrier USS George Washington at the US Navy's Yokosuka base in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Pakistan-Afghan peace talks hit impasse

ISTANBUL, 28 OCT

Peace talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan have hit an impasse in Istanbul after three days of negotiations, with state media in both countries Tuesday blaming each other for the failure to reach a deal while efforts by Turkey were still underway to end the deadlock. The talks aimed to reach lasting peace between the neighbours after dozens were killed along their border in the worst such violence since the Taliban took power in Kabul in 2021. Delegations from the two neighbours remain in Turkey, but it was not immediately clear whether a fourth day of talks would be held. Pakistani officials said the Taliban delegation was "not fully willing" to accept Pakistan's proposals. —***Agencies***

PHOTO: X

Lahore engulfed in smog as the most polluted city

LAHORE, 28 OCT

A thick, hazardous blanket of smog engulfed Lahore on Monday, with real-time data confirming that the city has once again become the most polluted in the world. According to Dawn, data from IQAir on Monday evening showed Lahore's Air Quality Index (AQI) soaring to a hazardous level of 312, while the concentration of PM2.5, the most dangerous particulate matter, reached 190.5 micrograms per cubic meter, over 25 times higher than the World Health Organisation's annual air quality guideline. The smog crisis has pushed the Punjab province into high alert. According to Dawn, Lahore was followed closely by other major cities in the national rankings, including Faisalabad (AQI 439) and Multan (AQI 438), both of which registered air quality levels considered hazardous. —***ANI***

14 die in 3 US strikes on 'drug' boats in Pacific

WASHINGTON, 28 OCT

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth announced that the US military carried out three strikes Monday in the waters of the Eastern Pacific against boats suspected of carrying drugs, killing 14 and leaving one survivor. The announcement made on social media Tuesday, marks a continued escalation in the pace of the strikes, which began in early September spaced weeks apart. This was the first time multiple strikes were announced in a single day. Hegseth said Mexican authorities "assumed responsibility for coordinating the rescue" of the sole survivor but didn't say if that person would stay in their custody. —***PTI***

Jamaica braces for Hurricane Melissa, 1.5 million to be hit

KINGSTON, 28 OCT

At least three people died in Jamaica before Hurricane Melissa even made landfall. The strongest storm of the year was set to pummel Jamaica on Tuesday as a catastrophic Category 5 storm.

It is the most destructive storm to hit the isle since record-keeping began 174 years ago.

Hours before the storm, the Jamaican government said it had done all it could to prepare as it warned of catastrophic damage.

The streets in the capital, Kingston, remained largely empty except for the lone stray dog crossing puddles and a handful of people walking briskly under tree branches waving in a stiff wind.

"There is no infrastructure in the region that can withstand a Category 5," Prime Minister Andrew Holness said. "The question now is the speed of recovery. That's the challenge."

The storm is expected to make landfall on Tuesday and slice diagonally across the island.

Shortly after, it is expected to hit Cuba.

Landslides, fallen trees and numerous power outages were reported ahead of the storm, with officials in Jamaica cautioning that the cleanup and damage assessment would be slow.

Necephor Mghendi, the international Red Cross' regional head of delegation for the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, said that at least 1.5 million people in the storm's path will be affected.

Melissa also has drenched the southern regions of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. At least three people had died in Haiti. —*PTI*

The 'eye of the storm' **PHOTO: X**

- Hurricane Melissa is the most destructive storm to hit Jamaica since record-keeping began 174 years ago. Upgraded to a Category 5 storm, it will soon hit Cuba

'Pak offers B'desh access to Karachi port'

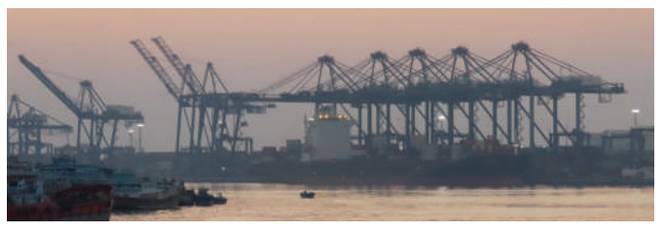
DHAKA/ISLAMABAD, 28 OCT

Pakistan has offered Bangladesh access to a key port in Karachi, Pakistani news channel Samaa reported on Tuesday. The port will allow Dhaka to expand its network of jute and other such goods, which gains significance after India has curbed the flow of such goods through its nodal points.

The deal comes shortly after the nations held the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting in Dhaka after nearly two decades. During the summit, Bangladesh interim Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus gave a Pakistani army official a map which showed parts of India's Northeast in Bangladesh.

The Karachi port gives Bangladesh a gateway for trade with countries such as China, the Gulf, and Central Asian nations.

Pakistan has also reduced taxes on jute and certain other products to help Bangladesh enhance the exports, according to Bangladeshi media reports. —*Agencies*



Bangladesh will look to expand its jute exports **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

South Korea faces high-stakes APEC summit with Trump-Xi

SEOUL, 28 OCT

South Korea's new President will host leaders from 20 countries for the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, where US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping are set to hold a high-stakes meeting on the sidelines.

The two-day annual APEC summit, which opens in Gyeongju on Friday, is likely to test Lee Jae Myung's diplomatic abilities as he faces tough foreign policy challenges.

Lee, in office less than five months, seeks to get along with friends and rivals alike with his self-proclaimed "pragmatic diplomacy."

In Gyeongju, Lee is expected to hold one-on-one meetings with Trump, Xi and new Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi. Trump will likely skip APEC's main conference.

Meanwhile, South Korea will look to finalise a trade deal with Washington during its first APEC summit in 20 years, but the two countries remain "sharply divided" over how much of South Korea's promised USD 350 billion US investment package should be provided as direct cash payments. South Korea will also look to woo Xi, who is visiting the country for the first time in 12 years.

The meeting between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is still murky, despite Lee and Trump's enthusiasm.

US President Donald Trump, China President Xi Jinping **PHOTO: X**

CHINA ASEAN SIGN EXPANDED FTA

China signed an expanded version of a free trade agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "Unity is strength," Chinese Premier Li Qiang told an ASEAN-China summit meeting. The signing of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0 came on the final day of the annual ASEAN summit and related meetings and was witnessed by Li Qiang and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who is serving as ASEAN chair this year. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

I shot Japan ex-PM Shinzo, says accused

TOKYO, 28 OCT

Tetsuya Yamagami, the man charged with assassinating former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe in 2022, pleaded guilty as his trial commenced on Tuesday in Nara. The 45-year-old admitted to using a homemade firearm to kill Abe, Japan's longest-serving post-war leader, during a campaign speech.

The Nara District Court announced it will hold several hearings until December, with a verdict expected on 21 January. Yamagami revealed to investigators that his actions stemmed from a deep-seated grudge against the Unification Church, which he blamed for his family's financial ruin following his mother's donations totalling around 100 million yen (approximately USD 650,000) to the group. He specifically targeted Abe due to links between the former leader's grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, and the church's introduction to Japan.

Public interest was evident with 727 people queuing for just 32 courtroom seats.

Witnesses expected to testify include Yamagami's mother and a lawmaker. —*ANI*

Hamas violated ceasefire deal: Bibi

JERUSALEM, 28 OCT

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that the remains of a hostage returned by Hamas overnight are body parts of a hostage who was recovered in Gaza by Israeli troops almost two years ago.

The Israeli military recovered the bodies of some 51 hostages during the two years of fighting.

Netanyahu called the return of body parts a "clear violation" of the US-brokered ceasefire agreement by Hamas.

There are still 13 bodies of hostages in Gaza, and the slow recovery of those remains is posing a challenge to implementing the next stages of the ceasefire.

Hamas has said it is struggling to locate the bodies amid the vast destruction in Gaza.

Machinery and workers from Egypt search for the bodies of hostages at Hamad City, in Khan Younis, Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

ISRAEL KILLS 3 IN WEST BANK

Israeli authorities said they had killed three Palestinian militants early on Tuesday during an operation in the northern part of the occupied West Bank.

Israeli police said the three men were shot as they came out of a cave near Jenin, a town in the northern West Bank known as a militant stronghold. A statement claimed the militants were planning an attack, but gave no further details.

The Israeli military carried out an airstrike afterward to destroy the cave. —*PTI*

RUSSIAN OIL GIANT TO SELL OVERSEAS ASSETS AFTER US SANCTIONS

MOSCOW, 28 OCT

Russia's energy and defence ties with the United States worsened on Monday as Moscow oil major Lukoil announced plans to sell its overseas assets, while President Vladimir Putin formally ended a nuclear disarmament pact with Washington.

Lukoil said it would begin divesting its international holdings under a wind-down licence from the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) after sanctions were imposed on the company and its subsidiaries. The US Treasury set a November 21 deadline for the firm to halt overseas operations or face penalties. The measures, announced by President Donald Trump, target Russia's two largest oil producers, Lukoil and Rosneft, in response to Moscow's continued war in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Putin signed a law terminating the long-dormant plutonium disposal agreement with the US, originally designed to limit weapons-grade material. The decision follows Russia's test of its nuclear-powered Burevestnik cruise missile, which Putin claimed has no global equivalent. —*ANI*

WITH A METAL FORK

Indian stabs 2 teens on US-Germany flight

NEW YORK, 28 OCT

A 28-year-old Indian national allegedly stabbed two teens with a metal fork and slapped a co-passenger on board a Chicago to Germany flight, according to American authorities.

The incident occurred on Saturday on a Lufthansa flight that had to be diverted to Boston Logan International Airport following the disturbance, the US Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts said in a press release on Monday.

According to charging documents, Praneeth Kumar Usiripalli allegedly stabbed a 17-year-old male passenger in the shoulder with a metal fork before stabbing another 17-year-old male passenger in the back of the head with the same fork. The second teen suffered a laceration on his head.

The alleged attack took place following the meal service, according to the document.

When attempts were made to subdue Usiripalli, he formed a gun with his fingers, put it in his mouth and pulled an imaginary trigger, the documents allege.

He then slapped a female passenger and also attempted to slap a flight crew member.

Usiripalli has been charged in the US District Court with one count of assault with a dangerous weapon with intent to do bodily harm while travelling on an aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the US.

He was arrested on 25 October and will appear in federal court in Boston at a later date.

If convicted, he could be sentenced to prison for up to 10 years, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to USD 250,000.

Usiripalli does not have "lawful status" in the US presently. He was previously in the US on a student visa and was enrolled in a master's programme in biblical studies, according to the press release. —*PTI*

PHOTO: AI

CAMPAIGNING BEGINS IN MYANMAR

BANGKOK, 28 OCT

Political parties in military-ruled Myanmar began their election campaigns on Tuesday, two months before national polls scheduled for 28 Dec. The elections are widely seen as an attempt by the junta to legitimise its 2021 coup, despite ongoing civil war that will prevent voting in many areas. The campaign launch came a day after UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that the polls could worsen instability. Critics argue the elections will be neither free nor fair, noting that Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) which won the last two elections has been barred from participation.

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) unveiled its slogan, "Stronger Myanmar".

Fifty-seven parties are registered, though fighting means voting will occur in only some townships. —*PTI*

Khin Yi, Chairman of the USDP in Naypyitaw, Myanmar on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

MCX opening delayed by 4 hrs due to tech glitch

MUMBAI, 28 OCT

The Multi-Commodity Exchange faced disruptions to operations due to a technical issue on Tuesday, forcing it to commence trading over 4 hours late and shift operations to its disaster recovery site. The commodities bourse said that all its trading systems are now functioning normally and an investigation into the issue has been initiated on priority. "Due to a technical issue at the Exchange, the commencement of trading on Tuesday, 28 October, 2025, was delayed. Operations were shifted to the Disaster Recovery (DR) site, and trading started at 1.25 pm," the Multi-Commodity Exchange (MCX) said in a regulatory filing. The commodities bourse added that all trading systems are now functioning normally. MCX noted that an investigation into the issue has been initiated on priority. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold plunges by Rs 4,100 to Rs 1.21 lakh/10g

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

Gold prices dropped by Rs 4,100 to Rs 1,21,800 per 10g in the national capital and slipped below USD 4,000 an ounce in the global markets on Tuesday as easing US-China trade tensions dampened safe-haven appeal. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal had closed at Rs 1,25,900 per 10g on Monday. In the local bullion market, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also tumbled by Rs 4,100 to Rs 1,21,200 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) from its previous close of Rs 1,25,300 per 10g. Silver prices also registered a steep fall of Rs 6,250 to Rs 1,45,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. Spot gold remained under pressure, declining by USD 94.36, or 2.37 per cent, to $3,887.03 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee falls by 8P, closes at 88.27 against USD

MUMBAI, 28 OCT

The rupee depreciated by 8 paise to close at 88.27 against the US dollar on Tuesday on weak domestic stock markets and foreign fund outflows. Forex traders said a weak US dollar and softening of crude oil prices cushioned the downside. Investors are also keeping a watch on the Federal Reserve's policy decision on Wednesday for further cues. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 88.34, and later traded in a range of 88.23 to 88.40 during the day. The local unit finally settled at 88.27 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a fall of 8 paise from its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index fell 0.09 per cent to 98.69. *—PTI*

RBI to auction ₹32K cr securites on 31 October

MUMBAI, 28 OCT

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), on behalf of the Government of India, has announced the re-issue of four dated Government Securities (G-Secs) totaling Rs 32,000 crore. The auction will take place on 31 October, 2025, with settlement on 3 November. The four securities include: a 5.91 per cent Government Security 2028 worth Rs 9,000 crore, a 6.28 per cent Government Security 2032 worth Rs 11,000 crore, a 7.24 per cent Government Security 2055 worth Rs 7,000 crore, and a 6.98 per cent Sovereign Green Bond 2054 worth Rs 5,000 crore. The government may retain an additional Rs 2,000 crore for each security, depending on demand. The auction, to be conducted through the RBI's Mumbai office via the e-Kuber platform, will follow the multiple-price method. *—ANI*

Ratan Tata's aid Mehli Mistry to exit Tata Trusts

Noel Tata and 2 others trustees block his reappointment

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata and two other powerful trustees considered close to him blocked the reappointment of late Ratan Tata's close associate and businessman Mehli Mistry as trustee, deepening the rift at the philanthropic arm that controls the holding company of Tata Group, people familiar with the matter said.

Noel Tata was appointed head of Tata Trusts following the death of Tata Group patriarch Ratan Tata last year.

TVS Motor Co's chairman emeritus Venu Srinivasan and former defence secretary Vijay Singh voted against Mistry's reappointment as trustee after the end of his three-year tenure on Tuesday, they said.

The three other trustees -- former Citibank India CEO Pramit Jhaveri, Mumbai lawyer Darius Khambata, and Pune-based philanthropist Jehangir HC Jehangir -- who are considered close to Mistry, supported his reappointment, they said.

Mehli Mistry is one of the power centres in the Tata Trusts, which control a majority stake in the holding company of the Tata Group *PHOTO: PTI*

The unprecedented vertical split marks a sharp departure from the recent consensus-driven approach.

Noel Tata and Mehli Mistry are two power centres in the Tata Trusts, which control a majority stake in the holding company of the Tata Group.

The former has the backing of Srinivasan and former defence secretary Vijay Singh, while the other three are with Mistry.

Differences between the two groups came to the fore in September, when Mistry and three other trustees -- Jhaveri, Khambata and Jehangir -- voted to remove Singh as Tata Trusts' representative on the board of Tata Sons -- the holding company of the salt-to-software conglomerate.

- TVS Motor Co's chairman emeritus Venu Srinivasan and former defence secretary Vijay Singh voted against Mistry's reappointment as trustee after the end of his three-year tenure on Tuesday, they said.

However, last week, Srinivasan was made a lifelong trustee in a unanimous decision.

While Mistry had remained tight-lipped about his next move, it is likely he will challenge it in court.

When contacted, Tata Trusts declined to comment. *—PTI*

A SEE-SAW TRADE

Markets slip amid profit-taking, weak global trends

MUMBAI, 28 OCT

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by 150 points in a volatile session on Tuesday due to profit-taking in IT, consumer durables and realty shares and weak trends in Asian markets.

In a see-saw trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 150.68 points or 0.18 per cent at 84,628.16. The index opened strong but erased gains in the late morning as investors took profits.

The barometer tanked nearly 560 points to hit a low of 84,219.39 during the day, but buying support at lower levels helped it recover some losses in the final half hour of trade.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 29.85 points or 0.11 per cent to 25,936.20.

Among Sensex firms, Trent, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Tata Consultancy Services and Bajaj Finance were the major laggards. However, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the major gainers. The BSE midcap gauge went up by 0.12 per cent and smallcap index edged higher by 0.06 per cent.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled lower. Markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended in the positive territory on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.78 per cent to USD 64.42 a barrel. *—PTI*

US sanctions: India to review Russian oil deals

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and other state-run refiners are unlikely to completely halt purchases of Russian crude despite the latest round of US sanctions, as restrictions target specific Russian suppliers rather than the oil itself.

Officials said four major Russian companies, including Rosneft and Lukoil, have been sanctioned, but crude purchases routed through non-sanctioned entities could still continue.

IOC Director (Finance) Anuj Jain said the company would carry on buying Russian crude "as long as we are complying with sanctions." Indian refiners are currently reassessing procurement strategies and reviewing contracts to ensure adherence to international compliance norms before placing new orders.

Rosneft, which supplied nearly 45 per cent of India's Russian crude imports last year, typically operates as an aggregator rather than a producer, sourcing oil from multiple fields across Russia. Industry sources said discounted prices, ranging between $3.5 and $5 per barrel, remain a key attraction, making Russian grades economically hard to ignore amid volatile global prices. *—Agencies*

Cabinet approves ToR of 8th pay panel

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

The Cabinet on Tuesday approved the terms of reference of the 8th Pay Commission, which will benefit 50 lakh central government employees and 69 lakh pensioners and will have implications on the emoluments of the staff of state governments.

The recommendations of the Commission, to be headed by former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desi, are likely to be effective from 1 January, 2026.

The commission will submit its report in 18 months and interim reports as and when they are finalised.

The announcement comes ahead of Bihar state elections, which will be held between 6 and 11 November.

According to an official statement, the commission will look into "the prevailing emolument structure, benefits and working conditions available to employees of Central Public Sector Undertakings and private sector" while finalising its recommendations.

- The announcement comes ahead of Bihar state elections, which will be held between 6 and 11 November.

While making its recommendations, the commission will also consider the economic conditions in the country and the need for fiscal prudence, and the need to ensure that adequate resources are available for developmental expenditure and welfare measures.

It would also take into account the unfunded cost of non-contributory pension schemes; and the likely impact of the recommendations on the finances of the state Governments which usually adopt the recommendations with some modifications, the statement said.

The commission's recommendations will cover nearly 50 lakh central government employees, including defence services personnel, and 69 lakh pensioners.. *—PTI*

Amazon to cut 30,000 jobs due to AI push

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

E-commerce giant Amazon is poised to cut approximately 30,000 corporate jobs starting Tuesday, as part of a significant cost-cutting initiative in response to overhiring during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Reuters. This reduction accounts for 10 per cent of Amazon's 350,000 corporate staff, although it represents a small fraction of the company's overall workforce of 1.55 million.

This latest layoff marks the largest job cuts since the 27,000 layoffs conducted between late 2022 and early 2023, following a report that the company plans to cut up to 15 per cent of its human resources staff.

Amazon has been gradually downsizing its workforce across various divisions over the past two years, with recent cuts affecting its Wondery podcast division and Amazon Web Services (AWS). The current layoffs will impact divisions such as Human Resources (People Experience and Technology), Devices and Services, and Operations.

75% of Amazon's workforce to be taken over by robots by 2033, planning major expansion due to which it can avoid mass hiring & cut down on the current job force.

CEO Andy Jassy is driving an initiative to reduce bureaucracy, having introduced an anonymous complaint line that prompted over 450 process changes. "Those who embrace this change... will be well-positioned to have high impact and help us reinvent the company," Jassy stated in June.

Despite these corporate reductions, Amazon plans to hire 250,000 seasonal workers to manage the anticipated surge in demand during the holiday season. Shares of Amazon rose 1.3 per cent to $227.11 as trading closed on Monday. *—Agencies*

SERVICES SECTOR ADDS 40M JOBS IN 6 YEARS: NITI AAYOG

NITI Aayog's latest report states India's services sector has emerged as a key driver of job creation. The employment share rose by over 3 per cent in 12 years. 40 million new jobs were created in the past six years.

SERVICES EMPLOYMENT SHARE

2011-12: 26.9%

2023-24: 29.7%

- 188 million: Total employees in service sector
- India's services employment share is 30% of national workforce. The global average is 50%.

GROSS EMPLOYMENT ELASTICITY

Gross employment elasticity is a measure of how responsive job creation is to economic growth.

Pre-Covid: 0.35%

Post-Covid: 0.63%

- The biggest employers are in trade, repair, and transport.
- Southern and western states lead in modern services employment.
- Smaller states rely more on education, health, and public administration for job generation.

SC relief on AGR dues boost VI's revival hopes

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

The Supreme Court's decision allowing the Centre to reconsider and reconcile Vodafone Idea's Rs 5,606 crore adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues for FY17 has been viewed by brokerages as a crucial step towards the company's long-term sustainability.

Citi called Monday's verdict "significantly positive", suggesting the government could offer partial waiver, payment extensions, or a combination of both. The move, it said, could ease uncertainty over Vodafone Idea's future and strengthen its ability to secure the planned Rs 25,000 crore bank funding, which has been stalled by a lack of clarity on AGR liabilities. Citi also noted that relief could stabilise the firm's share price near Rs 10 and potentially enable a new equity raise, reducing the government's current 49 per cent stake. Such measures, it added, could trigger a positive chain of events for Vodafone Idea and restore confidence among stakeholders.

Emkay Global said the government now has "enough room to create a plan for the company's long-term solvency" but retained a 'sell' rating, citing high leverage and unresolved spectrum debt. *—PTI*

Tech giants back Aus' under-16 social media ban

CANBERRA, 28 OCT

Global tech firms Meta, TikTok and Snap have agreed to comply with Australia's new law banning users under 16 from social media, despite voicing strong reservations about how the measure will work in practice. The legislation, among the world's toughest, takes effect on 10 December and could see companies fined up to $32.5 million for failing to block underage users. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat must remove minors or face heavy penalties. Meta's policy director, Mia Garlick, acknowledged "major technical challenges" in identifying and removing young users, while TikTok's Ella Woods-Joyce cautioned the age ban could drive children to unsafe online spaces. *—Agencies*

STARTING 4 NOVERMBER

Indian users can now use 'ChatGPT Go' for free

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

OpenAI on Tuesday said it will offer 'ChatGPT Go' -- that supports higher query limits and more image generation -- free for one year to users in India who sign up during a limited-time promotional period beginning 4 November.

ChatGPT Go is OpenAI's recently launched subscription tier that offers increased message limits, image generation, and file uploads for users in India, a market ChatGPT counts as its second-largest and among the fastest-growing.

"To celebrate OpenAI's DevDay Exchange event in Bengaluru on 4 November - its first in India - OpenAI is making ChatGPT Go available free for one full year to all users in India who sign up during a limited-time promotional period, starting 4 November," the company said.

ChatGPT Go was launched in India in August, designed in response to user feedback requesting more affordable access to ChatGPT's most advanced features, according to OpenAI.

- n the back of this strong demand, OpenAI has since expanded ChatGPT Go to close to 90 markets worldwide.

In the first month since its launch, the number of paid ChatGPT subscribers in India more than doubled.

On the back of this strong demand, OpenAI has since expanded ChatGPT Go to close to 90 markets worldwide.

Millions in India use ChatGPT daily, including a rapidly growing community of developers, students and professionals who are leveraging OpenAI's advanced tools.

Existing ChatGPT Go subscribers in India will be eligible for the free 12-month promotion. *—PTI*

Musk launches Wikipedia's AI rival Grokipedia

WASHINGTON, 28 OCT

Elon Musk has unveiled Grokipedia, an AI-generated online encyclopaedia, claiming it to be "10X better" than Wikipedia. Despite its ambitious launch on Monday, Grokipedia faced early issues, becoming inaccessible just an hour after its debut. Critics, including The Washington Post and Wired, noted the platform's perceived bias, particularly in topics such as gender, diverging from Wikipedia's more inclusive definitions. For instance, Grokipedia describes gender as a "binary classification...based on biological sex," contrasting sharply with Wikipedia's broader interpretation.

STARLINK LEASES MUMBAI OFFICE

In tandem, Musk's Starlink is making strides to establish a presence in India by leasing office space in Mumbai's Chandivali for operations. According to The Economic Times, the rental agreement covers 1,294 sqft with a five-year lease, signalling Starlink's commitment to delivering satellite internet in underserved regions of India.

The company is set to establish nine gateway earth stations and has received temporary approval for system testing under strict government guidelines. Starlink aims to enhance connectivity for India's 850 million internet user. —Agencies

Gukesh's calm revenge over Nakamura wins hearts

D Gukesh achieved a memorable revenge win over Hikaru Nakamura *PHOTO: PTI*

MUMBAI, 28 OCT

D Gukesh achieved a memorable revenge win over Hikaru Nakamura at the 2025 Clutch Chess Showdown, just weeks after Nakamura's controversial act of throwing Gukesh's king piece into the crowd during an earlier event. Gukesh's calm, composed performance in their rematch earned him widespread praise from fans and the chess community alike.

This victory was marked not by flashy celebrations but by Gukesh quietly resetting the board after the win, a respectful contrast to Nakamura's earlier theatrics. The gesture quickly went viral online, with many applauding Gukesh for exhibiting true sportsmanship and maturity under pressure.

Gukesh's win at the Clutch Chess Showdown highlighted his growing stature in the chess world. After an initial stumble against Magnus Carlsen, the young Indian champion secured three wins and two draws on day one, taking the lead in the tournament standings. Nakamura sits third, trailing behind Gukesh and Carlsen.

The rematch was highly anticipated due to the viral controversy, and Gukesh handled the pressure with grace and precision, sealing his victory without showboating. Observers noted that his quiet demeanor after beating the world number two was a powerful statement about character and the spirit of competitive chess.

Overall, Gukesh's composed and skillful win over Nakamura in 2025 was not only a sporting triumph but also a demonstration of humility and professionalism that resonated strongly with fans around the world. This remarkable moment has firmly placed Gukesh as a rising star known for both talent and exemplary conduct. *—PTI*

Hikaru Nakamura *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Shah-Diya first Indians to qualify for WTT Finals

DUBAI, 28 OCT

In a historic first for India, Manush Shah and Diya Chitale have qualified for the WTT Finals. As per the latest WTT Series Finals Race rankings on Tuesday, the Shah-Chitale pair became the fifth mixed doubles team to confirm a spot at the year-end event, which will take place in Hong Kong, China, from 10 to 14 December. The 'WTT Series Finals Race' rankings at the end of the WTT Star Contender Muscat (17–22 November) will determine the seven pairs who automatically qualify for the WTT Finals. The eighth spot will be taken by a host wildcard pair. This season, Shah and Chitale have won a WTT Contender title in Tunis and also finished runners-up at the WTT Star Contender event in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil. The Indian pair is ranked eighth in the latest ITTF rankings. *—PTI*

India bids for 2028 Asian Indoor Athletics C'hips

NEW DELHI, 28 OCT

India on Tuesday submitted bids to host the 2028 Asian Indoor Athletics Championships as well as the 2026 Asian Relays, in line with the country's efforts to stage continental and global events in the coming years. If India succeeds in its bids for the events, it would be the first time the country would be hosting the two continental competitions. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has proposed Bhubaneswar as the host city for the 2028 Asian Indoor Athletics Championships, while the venue for the 2026 Asian Relays is yet to be finalised. "We have submitted the bid for the 2028 Asian Indoor Athletics Championships with Bhubaneswar as the host city.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@NBA

NBA Roundup: Oklahoma City takes down Dallas

NEW YORK, 28 OCT

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 13 of his 23 points in the third quarter, helping the Oklahoma City Thunder stay undefeated with a 101-94 road win over the Dallas Mavericks on Monday night. The Thunder led by 22 in the fourth quarter, but the Mavericks got within one in the final minute before Oklahoma City steadied late offensively. Oklahoma City went more than 5:30 without scoring as Dallas reeled off a 15-0 run during that stretch to cut the deficit to four before the Mavericks eventually got to within one. But the Thunder got a driving layup from Isaiah Hartenstein to stretch the lead to three, then after a fruitless possession for Dallas, Gilgeouswent to the free-throw line.*—PTI*

Six Indian boxers sail into final at YAG

MANAMA, 28 OCT

Indian pugilists packed a punch as six of them sailed into the final to assure the country at least half a dozen medals, while several shuttlers also advanced in the Youth Asian Games here on Tuesday.India's 15-year-old Khushi Chand secured a place in the girls' 46kg gold-medal bout by defeating Mongolia's Altanzul Altangadas 5-0. She will meet China's Chen Fang-yu in the title bout on Thursday.In the girls' 54kg category, Chandrika Pujari had little difficulty overcoming Kazakhstan's teenager boxer Ramina by a unanimous 5-0 decision to set up a title clash.*—PTI*

1st T20I: Focus on SKY's form as India take on Australia

Both countries have won eight of their last 10 T20I games

CANBERRA, 28 OCT

The leader in Suryakumar Yadav will nudge the batter in him to take center stage and start contributing handsomely with the willow when India take on Australia in the opening T20 International here on Wednesday. It promises to be a battle on even keel, with both countries having won eight of their last 10 T20I games with a defeat each. While India had one tied game, Australia saw one game washed out.

Since being appointed captain, Suryakumar's record has been phenomenal in terms of results, with 23 wins in 29 games so far, adhering to the new template of fearless cricket where every batter goes all guns blazing from ball one.

The aggression at all costs and Surya's own leadership skills have worked really well with an all-win bilateral series record and the Asia Cup triumph, albeit against some second rung continental teams, including Pakistan, who are a few light years behind India in terms of skill, quality, and execution.

While bounce in the Manuka Oval track gives him a chance to ride on it and get maximum returns, Josh Hazlewood's presence and those Test match lengths on and in the off-stump corridor will create problems.

It will not only be a new set of questions for someone like Abhishek but also an old set of queries for the Indian skipper, whose critics always point out that he hasn't consistently scored against big teams in the past few years.

The 12 overs from Varun, Kuldeep Yadav, and Axar Patel will be very important alongside Bumrah and Arshdeep's opening spells against Travis Head and the dangerous Mitchell Marsh.

All eyes will also be on Mitchell Owen, Australia's new T20 star, who played a game for Punjab Kings last year. Owen was terrific against India in a recent ODI in Adelaide, but the possibility of facing 12 overs of slow bowling will definitely test his hitting skills.

Suryakumar Yadav *PHOTO: PTI*

Aggressive Australia has no fear of failure against India

Australia captain Mitchell Marsh understands that an ultra-aggressive batting strategy won't always be successful.

Still, he emphasized that his team will maintain its attacking approach as part of their preparation for next year's T20 World Cup, after falling short in the last two editions. Australia is set to face India in a five-match T20I series starting on Wednesday, which is part of their build-up for the tournament hosted by India and Sri Lanka in February-March next year. Australia last won the T20 World Cup in 2021, while India triumphed in the most recent edition in 2024. *—PTI*

INDIA VS AUSTRALIA

INDIA vs AUSTRALIA
Match starts at
1.45 pm IST

HEAD TO HEAD AT CANBERRA

PLAYED:	32
INDIA Won:	20
AUS Won:	12

Mitchell Marsh *PHOTO: PTI*

ICC WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

S Africa look to iron out batting flaws against England

GUWAHATI, 28 OCT

South Africa will hope to address their batting frailties against spin and produce a solid all-round show when they face four-time champions England in the first semifinal of the ICC Women's World Cup here on Wednesday.

En route to the knockout stage, South Africa suffered two heavy defeats, and their batting came apart against spin on both occasions.

Left gutted after being bowled out for 69 in their opening game, the South Africans recovered well to record narrow but gritty wins over New Zealand, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. However, their struggles against spin resurfaced in the final league game against Australia, who bundled them out for just 97 in 24 overs. While the South African batters failed to pick the line and were undone by the drift against England, they were completely left gobsmacked by Alana King's leg-spin in the match against Australia.

South Africa vs England
1st SF Match starts at
3 pm IST

England will look to exploit this South African weakness again and rely not only on their all-round strength but also on their spin trio of Sophie Ecclestone, Linsey Smith, and Charlie Dean to stifle the South African batters. Seamer Lauren Bell will need to apply pressure early on, while Alice Capsey has been in good bowling rhythm, having claimed five wickets.

Tazmin Brits, who struck 101 against India in Indore, has since managed three ducks, a 55, and a 6, underlining her shaky form. She had scored three consecutive centuries before the World Cup, and South Africa will hope she can provide a solid start on the big day. Sune Luus (157 runs) and Marizanne Kapp (162) have also been inconsistent, contributing to the team's batting woes. *—PTI*

Paris Masters: Vacherot and Rinderknech set to meet again

PARIS, 28 OCT

Cousins Valentin Vacherot and Arthur Rinderknech are set to face each other in the second round of the Paris Masters on Wednesday, following their Shanghai Masters final clash this month.

Vacherot, who defeated Frenchman Rinderknech in Shanghai to become the first player from Monaco to win an ATP title, cruised past 14th seed Jiri Lehecka 6-1, 6-3 in the first round in Paris on Tuesday.

"I'm living a fairytale... that's why I'm playing so well, I'm enjoying every second," said Vacherot, who was 204th in the world when he became the lowest-ranked player to win an ATP Masters 1000 tournament.

Rinderknech, a wildcard in the tournament like his cousin, beat Fabian Marozsan 7-6 (7-5), 7-6 (7-4) on Monday to reach the second round.

"This time I am the first one to play and (Vacherot) has to follow suit. I prefer it this way, because it was tiring in Shanghai," Rinderknech said.

Vacherot said he was proud of how Rinderknech had played against Marozsan. *—PTI*

Kaverappa returns with a bang to help Karnataka

SHIVAMOGGA, 28 OCT

Pacer Vidwath Kaverappa's triumphant return for Karnataka helped secure the first-innings lead and the resultant three points, in a drawn 2025-26 Ranji Trophy Elite Group-B encounter against Goa, at the KSCA Navule Stadium in Shivamogga on Tuesday.

The 26-year-old's career was on the ascendency before the 2024-25 season, but multiple injury setbacks came as cruel blows as he played just two First Class matches in 12 months.

With a fine five-wicket haul versus Goa (23-6-51-5), where he blew away the opposition's lower-order, he showed what Karnataka had missed out on last season, and in the campaign-opener a fortnight ago, where Saurashtra's last two wickets collected 58 runs and took a narrow four-run first-innings lead.Kaverappa's effort limited Goa to 217, 154 runs adrift of the home side. The visitor was asked to follow on, but Manthan Khutkar (55 n.o., 135b, 5x4) and Abhinav Tejrana (73 n.o., 126b, 9x4) carried Goa to 143 for one before the truce was called just after Tea.

Vidwath Kaverappa *PHOTO: PTI*

First to go in the morning was overnight batter Arjun Tendulkar (47, 122b, 6x4, 1x6), caught behind off Kaverappa. Mohit Redkar, who had buckled down on day three to help Goa reach 171 fox six, turned belligerent, smashing Kaverappa and fellow speedster Vyshak for three sixes. *—PTI*

WOMEN'S ODI BATTING RANKINGS

Mandhana solidifies No. 1 status with career-best rating

DUBAI, 28 OCT

Star India opener Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday strengthened her status as the No.1 batter in women's ODI cricket after achieving a career-best rating on the back of an outstanding home World Cup campaign.

The 29-year-old left-handed batter scored 109 against New Zealand and 34 not out against Bangladesh in her last two matches and moved to a rating of 828, almost 100 points clear of Australia's Ash Gardner in second (731), who jumped six spots after her unbeaten century against England.

It continues a dream run for Mandhana, who was named ICC Women's Player of the Month for September 2025 for her performances in the ODI series against Australia before the World Cup.

South African captain Laura Wolvaardt also moved into the top three with a jump of two spots, courtesy of her knocks of 90 and 31.

England's Amy Jones, meanwhile, entered the top 10 with a four-spot climb to ninth (656), while Annabel Sutherland enjoyed the biggest jump of those in the top 40, moving 16 spots to 16th (613). Another Indian batter, Pratika Rawal, who will miss the remainder of the World Cup with injury, moved into the top 30 (27th) with a rating of 564.

Spin has played a big part at the tournament, and the rankings jumps reflect the work of several to shine. *—PTI*

Smriti Mandhana *PHOTO: PTI*

AFTER SPLEEN INJURY

Iyer is stable and recovering in Sydney hospital

SYDNEY, 28 OCT

India's ODI vice-captain Shreyas Iyer, who suffered a ruptured spleen and rib cage injury during the third ODI against Australia, has been shifted out of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a Sydney hospital and is now in a stable condition, easing concerns over his health.

"He has been shifted out of ICU and may take a few more days before he is discharged from the hospital in Sydney," a BCCI source privy to the development told PTI on condition of anonymity.

Subsequent tests revealed internal bleeding caused by a laceration in the spleen, following which he was admitted to the ICU for close monitoring. "Now see, we are not doctors.

When we saw from outside, when the catch was taken (by Shreyas), it looked like it was normal," said India T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav on the eve of the first T20I against Australia in Canberra.

"After that, we talked to him, when he was talking normally, we felt that it was a little better now, because doctors and physios told us that it was an unfortunate incident, which happens rarely. But sometimes rare incidents happen to rare talent." It is understood that BCCI's head of medical services, Dr. Dinshaw Pardiwala, in his communication to the board, commended the on-field medical staff for their swift and efficient response, which helped avert a potentially critical situation.Meanwhile, sources indicated that Iyer's family members are expected to travel to Sydney soon to be by his side as he continues to recover. *—PTI*

India's ODI vice-captain Shreyas Iyer *PHOTO: PTI*

KSCA ELECTION ON 30 NOVEMBER

BENGALURU, 28 OCT

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) elections will be held on November 30, its Chief Executive Officer announced here on Tuesday.

The Raghuram Bhatt-headed committee's tenure ended on September 30, and the delay in announcing the date of the election has led to rounds of confusion in the state cricketing circles. "As decided in our meeting held on 14 October 2025, and reiterated in the meeting held on 25th October 2025, the KSCA election is scheduled to be held on Sunday, 30 November 2025," KSCA CEO Ghosh informed through an email. *—PTI*